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COMICS FEATURE

JULY NUMBER 10

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THE UPSTART INTERVIEW

Chaykin, Sherman, Miller, and ***Simonson***— interviewed ***en masse.*** pg. 28

THE UNLIKLIEST SUCCESS OF ALL

POWER MAN/IRON FIST reviewed ***by Kurt Busiek.*** pg.48

THE CAPTAIN AMERICA THAT NEVER WAS

The inside story—and art—from Stern and Byrne's last ***CAPTAIN AMERICA.*** pg. 22

ANIMATED CHATTER

A full report on THUNDARR THE BARBARIAN ***by Steve Gerber and Paul Dini*** pg. 51

Plus a look at THE INFERIOR FIVE show that didn't quite make it ***by Richard Howell*** pg. 55

CLASSIC CONVERSATIONS

unpublished interviews from the past that are too good to waste. This issue: Murphy Anderson ***by Carl Gafford and Paul Kupperberg*** pg. 72

END NOTES

Peter Sanderson critiques POPEYE—both E.C. Segar's and Robert Altman's. pg.79

THE FANDOM ZONE

"The Marvel Age of Comics" dawns in FANDOM ORIGINS ***by Don and Maggie Thompson*** pg. 40

Convention report ***by Peter Sanderson.*** pg.43

Plus convention listings, comics clubs, and 20 YEARS AGO THIS MONTH.

GUILTY FANTASIES

Sex with your favorite super-heroine? An investigative report ***by Peter Gillis*** pg. 76

HEADLINES

All the latest. pg. 13

THE LOST COMICS COMPANIES

A look at Tem Publishing Co., Inc., publishers of the first Simon & Kirby work, ***by Chuck Wooley*** pg.68

OPENING NOTES

An explanation of ***COMICS FEATURE***'s vaunted "positive attitude." ***by Carol Kalish*** pg. 6

MORNING NOTICES

Comments on past issues, and issues raised in past issues. pg. 7

SUPER-TEAM SPIRIT

A history of the Fawcett and Quality heroes ***by Murray Ward*** pg. 61

BONUS INTERVIEW

A chat with ***E. Nelson Bridwell,*** a surprising source of fan favoritism ***by Margaret O'Connell*** pg. 56

Front Cover by John Byrne
Back cover by Alex Toth

STAFF

HAL SCHUSTER publisher

RICHARD HOWELL
CAROL KALISH
editors

BOB SORON
PAUL DINI
assistant editors

PETER SANDERSON
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JACK SCHUSTER president

RICHARD HOWELL production manager

CAROL KALISH circulation manager

BILL KRUTCHICK financial officer

KATHIE MARET BENNET POMERANTZ traffic department

BIZARRO TYPESETTER #1 mascot

CONTRIBUTORS

Steve Adams
Bill Black
Kurt Busiek
John Byrne
Paul Dini
Carl Gafford
Steve Gerber
Peter Gillis
Richard Howell
Carol Kalish
Paul Kupperberg
Tom Linehan
Ted McKeever
Margaret O'Connell
Mitch O'Connell
Hannah Shapero
Roger Stern
Peter Sanderson
Don Thompson
Maggie Thompson
Alex Toth
S. Vance
Murray Ward
Chuck Wooley

COMICS FEATURE (ISSN 0199-7459) is published monthly by New Media Publishing, Inc., 12345 Starkey, Largo, FL 33543. Controlled circulation paid at Boston, MA. POSTMASTER: Send address changed to COMICS FEATURE, 31½ Roberts Road #2, Cambridge, MA 02138. ©1981 New Media Publishing, Inc. All submissions should be sent to editorial offices located at 31½ Roberts Road #2, Cambridge, MA 02138.

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OPENING NOTES

ABSOLUTELY POSITIVE

by Carol Kalish

It's been just over a year since ***COMICS FEATURE*** first appeared on the newsstands and in comics specialty shops. It's been an exciting period for us, your overworked editors, and we hope an enjoyable one for you. During the past year the magazine has changed editors, increased its page count, added new contributors and new columns. Despite all these changes and additions, however, the magazine it still the same in one respect: it is still ***the*** magazine which strives to maintain a positive attitude towards comics.

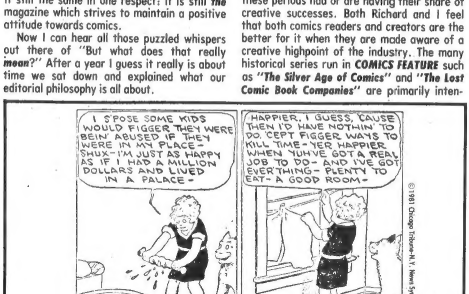
Now I can hear all those puzzled whispers out there of "But what does that really ***mean***?" After a year I guess it really is about time we sat down and explained what our editorial philosophy is all about.

The comics industry, like any example of a popular art form, has over the many years of its existence had many different periods of creative ups and downs. Many older readers will claim, with some justification, that comics reached their peak during the 40s...the 50s...the 60s...the 70s...or, in the case of some of the newer comics fans, the 80s. In a way all these fans are right since each of these periods had or are having their share of creative successes. Both Richard and I feel that both comics readers and creators are the better for it when they are made aware of a creative highpoint of the industry. The many historical series run in ***COMICS FEATURE*** such as ***"The Silver Age of Comics"*** and ***"The Lost Comic Book Companies"*** are primarily intended to alert people to a previously overlooked title that might have been missed merely because it came out before they were born or because distribution difficulties prevented it from being sold in a particular area. Our interviews with less prominent comics professionals are designed to interest our readers in creators much admired by the industry itself but less often noticed by younger fans. In part, then, our oft-stated "positive attitude" consists of a dogged determination to alert our readers to the wonders of past comics and the complex, and often times eccentric, approaches that various creators have used to work within the medium.

COMICS FEATURE's positive editorial commitment, though, can also be found in its reviews of more recent comics. Nothing is really gained when a reviewer moans and groans about how rotten a particular comic is. It's far more rewarding to review comics or series which offer the promise of being in the vanguard of the industry's next creative outburst. More is accomplished by being positive about the industry's successes and by giving well-earned praise to series which are examples of craftsmanlike storytelling enlivened by new creative twists.

Although we prefer to focus on series which seem positive indicators of the industry's artistic growth and experimentation, we also feel that an occassional negative review can check alarming tendencies and point out creative failures which might, if unnoticed, undermine the industry's pre-existing strengths.

The comics industry is an incredibly rich popular art. ***COMICS FEATURE*** has a responsibility to uncover those riches for its readers. The comics industry is also an evolving field, and again, it's our editorial purpose to cover that evolution. By being hopeful about the growth and direction the industry's evolution will take, by emphasizing the creative successes of both the past and the present while at the same time not hesitating to point out its creative failures and excesses, ***COMICS FEATURE*** hopes to be a magazine to which a reader can turn for criticism which informs and stimulates the reader's interest and understanding of the comics medium. ●


I S'POSE SOME KIDS WOULD FIGGER THEY WERE BEIN' ABUSED IF THEY WERE IN MY PLACE - SHUX - I'M JUST AS HAPPY AS IF I HAD A MILLION DOLLARS AND LIVED IN A PALACE -
HAPPIER, I GUESS, 'CAUSE THEN I'D HAVE NOTHIN' TO DO. 'CEPT FIGGER WAYS TO KILL TIME - 'ER HAPPIER WHEN YUH'VE GOT A REAL JOB TO DO - AND I'VE GOT EVERYTHING - PLENTY TO EAT - A GOOD ROOM -
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We've begged, we've pleaded—and now we're begging and pleading again: If you submit art or articles to us we cannot possibly send the material back to you on time if you don't put your name and address on it—on every piece if it's a series of illustrations. Some of our contributors have not received their artwork back because we don't know where to send it.

Also, we would like each potential contributor to supply return postage for his or her submissions. They get sent faster that way. Honest.

THE EVER-CONTINUING APOLOGIA SECTION

A belated photo credit to Diane Noomin for the photograph of Bill Griffith in ***FEATURE #7***. Our apologies, Diane.

Due to an oversight, two photo copyright notices were not included in our sixth issue. The photos of Paul Levitz and Roger Stern should both have carried ©1980 Fantagraphics, Inc. notices. We regret the error.

MORNING NOTICES

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Marv Wolfman
FLUSHING, NEW YORK

Dear Richard and Carol:

Just a short note to tell you how much you've improved ***COMICS FEATURE*** in the past several months. Your year-end issue was quite good, and the book-by-book summary was an idea I'm surprised hasn't been done before. It's a pleasure to see a fan type of magazine that exists based on the premise of liking comics rather than tearing them apart for no reason other than tearing them apart. You're critical, but not insulting. Keep it up.

The Leonard Starr interview is another long-overdue pleasure. You seem to be going out of your way to find other than the ordinary interview to do. Keep that up—it makes for much better reading than other interviews done with the same run-of-the-mill folk. We newcomers will have plenty of time to be spoken to; some of the folks who have been producing such high-grade material for endless years are the ones you should concentrate on.

Concerning your reviews, I appreciated both of them, and I'm pleased to note that people have noted the improved excitement we're trying to put into ***GREEN LANTERN.*** As for ***[THE NEW TEEN] TITANS,*** Peter [Sanderson]'s comments hit the nail right on the head. It is no accident that we've used the parent/child relationship as a basis for the book. When I first took on the title I wanted "Teen" removed, but for many reasons we weren't able to do that. So, rather than ignore that intrinsic part of the comic, I decided to make what could have been their weak point, their strong point. Also, I'm pleased to see that Peter picked up on Wonder Girl...she's been underplayed since the book began, but my attitude with her is that she is a very understated character who is possibly the one completely stable member of the team in every way. She does know who she is, what she wants, and what she can get, and there is no reason for her to shout at the world like so many of the other characters do.

Anyway, I just wanted to let you know how much I enjoyed the issue. It was positive, historical, and interesting. If you can keep up the quality, you can't help but succeed.

Your comments were much appreciated, Marv, and, to use your own phrase, you "hit the nail right on the head" as regards FEATURE's editorial standpoint towards being "critical, but not insulting." We hope continue that position in the future, as this issue's editorial should make ever clearer.

Also, as regards our choice of interview subjects (and it certainly is our—an editorial—choice, too), we agree that there are too many professionals who have been virtually ignored too long for us to continually interview the same six or seven fan-favorites in sequence. The Cary Bates and Leonard Starr interviews were only a beginning in that. Keep watching. Incidentally, you might be interested in knowing that we were warned against printing either the Bates or the Starr interviews as "major parts of the magazine" because of their alleged "low drawing power" (especially funny in Len's case), but we persisted. We're happy to report that both issues have sold particularly well, and, judging from the mail on them, the interviews were a large part of that.

We might also mention, however, that we don't intend to ignore the younger professionals either. There doesn't seem to be any reason to restrict ourselves to any one particular type of professional—everyone we've interviewed so far, be they old-timer or rising star, has presented interesting observations and opinions—and that's the name of the game.

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Joyce Valente
WEST NEWTON, MA

Gentlemen and Ladies:

First, I would like to compliment you on the quality of ***COMICS FEATURE***'s articles, especially the three-part series on ***"Women in TERRY AND THE PIRATES."***

Both that particular article and the statement in ***"Opening Notes" (FEATURE #9)*** on ***STEVE CANYON***'s circulation woes leads me to make the following comments on the state of the art in newspaper adventure strips. Not only are the old masters, such as Caniff, Foster, and so forth, are quietly fading from the scene through either apathy or retirement, but new adventure strips are not being developed. Without exception, the only new adventure (or soap-opera) strips appearing ,(at least in the Boston area) are proven properties from either the movies or television. ***STAR WARS*** at first, was graced by the artistic talents of Russ Manning, only to fall victim to bland and undistinguished stories and then to a replacement of Russ Manning by another artist. Both ***STAR TREK*** and ***DALLAS*** seem to foreshadow the regrettable future of adventure strips in which the only important criteria for a strip to be accepted for syndication is that the strip must be based on a "hot" property that has already been accepted as popular with the general public and that the artist in charge of these strips proves only his (or her) ability to recreate the faces of the actors or actresses in the original TV or movie versions.

What we can probably look forward to are blandly-written strips with no artistic ability beyond giving us close-ups upon close-ups of familiar faces and little else. In fact, even ***SPIDER-MAN*** as a strip has offered little outside of a re-hash of previous stock situations such as Aunt May getting romantic about Doc

Ock while Doc Ock plots Spidey's downfall. Even ***ANNIE*** (which is the best adventure strip on the market right now) owes its maintainence partially to the Broadway musical and the upcoming movie based on the musical. According to ***COMICS FEATURE***'s ***"Short Subjects" (FEATURE #9)***, the new ***LONE RANGER*** strip (by Cary Bates and Gil Kane) will appear only when the movie version appears on our neighborhood screens. In the ***"Headlines"*** section of ***COMICS FEATURE #8***, a possible revival of ***TERRY AND THE PIRATES*** (which was mentioned there) is possible only because it will be appearing as a future motion picture. If this strip is drawn by Joe Kubert as reported, then at least I can accept it on an artistic level, as Mr. Kubert is a highly talented cartoonist, especially in the depiction of women. So Mr. Kubert's versions of The Dragon Lady and Burma are worth looking forward to, and Kubert knows how to create backgrounds and details. However, I am not certain of Kubert's abilities at writing and it is claimed that he will be writing the strip as well. Hopefully, he will not fall into the same pitfalls as the ***SPIDER-MAN*** strip and endlessly re-hash past stories and characterizations to the point of absurdity. It is also to be hoped that Mr. Kubert will not sharply deviate from Mr. Caniff's original characterizations. Do we really need a Burma who decides that wrinkles are acceptable? Would The Dragon Lady decide to give up crime and become a social worker? Also, would Kubert take up where George Wunder left off (Dolores Deepsix, etc.) or stick to Caniff's pre-World War II or World War II time periods?

Still, the future is not hopeful as far as adventure or soap opera strips are concerned. It seems that we will be reduced to reading the next installment of ***MARK TRAIL*** instead of ***STEVE CANYON.***

One final note: will there be an overview of the Saturday morning cartoon series ***THUNDARR THE BARBARIAN*** in a future issue of ***COMICS FEATURE?***

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You bet you'll see a piece on THUNDARR, Joyce, unless of course you're not holding this issue, in which case you're not reading this response, and well...what's the use?

Oh, and Cary Bates informs us that Gil Kane, the second "final" choice for the art chores on THE LONE RANGER strip, will now not be doing it, due to other commitments (as was the case with Russ Heath before him). However, some decision on the RANGER's artist will be made shortly, and you can expect to see it reported here.

Steven Grant
MADISON WI

Dear Richard/Carol,

Just for the record, I also had a hand in plotting the ***MARVEL SUMMER OLYMPICS/MARVEL SUPER-HEROES SPECTACULAR*** book; in fact, the Australian (Talisman), and the Frenchman (Le Peregrine) are my characters, with Mark Gruenwald designing the costumes. Bill Mantlo, as I recall, created Defensor and Ursa Major (whom Bill and I recently reworked in ***THE INCREDIBLE HULK*** comic). Mark, in his prolific way, came up with The Arabian Knight (though this might have been Bill's), Blitzkrieg, and The Collective Man, while [Mark's girlfriend] provided Sabra. Since the project required an international cast—it was for the Olympics, after all—we were forced to create a wider spectrum of foreign heroes than Marvel had on tap.

And—as an aside to Kurt Busiek, re: his ***MOON KNIGHT*** article—my fiancee can probably tell you why, of all the MK personalities, Marlene is in love with Steven Grant.

I found this issue, especially the Cary Bates interview, quite entertaining. Keep up the good work.

Tsk tsk, Steven. You're not THAT Steven Grant. We knew this multiple-identity business was bound to cause more confusion.

Oh, and thanks for both the encouragement and the corrections. If any misinformation creeps through our admittedly-not-infallible editorial staff, we'd like to hear about it—especially news or historical corrections.

Paul A. Zuckerman
BROOKLYN NY

Dear People In Charge:
Re: ***COMICS FEATURE #8***

The best compliment I can pay **CF** is that I enjoy it. That has always struck me as the main reason for being a part of fandom—to enjoy comics and the world which has been created around it.

I think this is what separates **CF** from

[other magazine's name deleted], which has many redeeming features, but everyone who writes for it appears to be mad—mad at comics, mad at each other, mad at life. One almost has to be a masochist to write a letter to them; the current issue's letter page reads like a battlefield. Don't get me wrong; strong opinions don't bother me—I even relish them. No, it's the sheer amount of venom spewed forth in the name of the love of comics that disgusts me.

Heck, I've been reading comics for over twenty years now. Briefly in high school, I felt I had "outgrown" them. Three years later, in college, I returned just in time to catch Adams' ***GL/GA***, Wrightson's ***SWAMP THING***, Smith's ***CONAN***, Kubert's ***TARZAN***, Kirby's ***NEW GODS*** epic, the new Superman, the new-old look Batman, ***WARLOCK***, and other goodies. Ten years now, and despite some ups and downs, I still enjoy them. And every so often an old-timer, like The Flash, breathes new life again.

So as an old time/long time fan, I applaud the work NMI has been doing. I'm waiting anxiously for the other publications which you have announced; some sound like they'll fill a huge hole in fandom. Meanwhile, ***CF*** fits the bill. ***CF*** steers a middle ground: neither condemning nor whitewashing Marvel's and DC's output. In addition, you are providing excellent articles concerning the history of comics.

A few words about the current issue:

Cary Bates' interview was welcomed here. The only other interview of his was back in the ***AMAZING WORLD OF DC***, which was a house organ. Bates is under-rated and I think he put the finger on the reason why—he writes for the general public and not for the fans. Yet his recent ***"Jonathan Kent"*** story in ***ACTION*** was the kind of story a fan loves to read. He is one of the few writers today who can plot a story, and recently he has combined that with increased characterizations. His current ***SUPERBOY*** is one of the best series that character has had. I would hate to see comics lose him, but he apparently has other career goals in mind.

Briefly, I enjoyed the Thompsons' history of early fandom and the conclusion of the ***TERRY AND THE PIRATES*** article. I hope you have more articles on the Golden Age of strips. Caniff and his brethren have influenced so many comic book artists that they deserve greater recognition among today's fans, who often appear not to be able to see very far behind the current favorite.

A few words about Margaret O'Connell's conclusions in her article, ***"Superman's Other Loves."*** I think she overlooked two factors behind the lack of happy endings in the ***"Imaginary Stories"*** in which Superman would get married. First, the ***"Imaginary Stories"*** generally emphasized unhappy endings over happier ones, whether or not marriage was involved. The first, and greatest, of the format was ***"The Death of Superman"*** which title says it all. As a quick look at Marvel's ***WHAT IF?*** series will show, imaginary stories are always more dramatic if someone dies at the end...and, of course, easier to write. (And ***WHAT IF?*** is an ***"Imaginary Story"*** book, no matter what Marvel says.)

Second, editor Mort Weisinger felt that the formula he had created was successful, yet he was constantly beseiged by requests to alter it by having Superman get married. So he used the ***"Imaginary Story"*** format as a vehicle to show how bad everything would be if Supes would marry. He also used the device to show why Superman needed his Clark Kent identity or what would happen if someone else had become Superman (or Batman in some unusual variations of the theme). Indeed, the last Weisinger story to appear in ***SUPERMAN*** featured a Super-Lex Luthor and an evil Clark Kent. The ***"Superman-Red and Superman-Blue"*** story, on the other hand, emphasized the ***status quo*** in a reverse manner: if Superman could end war, crime, disease, and whatever else, he'd have nothing else to do—and there would be no more stories to read.

In any case, I don't think the picture was a bleak as Ms. O'Connell depicted it. Many stories showed Superman happily married, using the marriage as a springboard for a story usually revolving around the children, but not always. ***"The Sons of Superman"*** and ***"The Son of Jimmy Olsen"*** fall into the former category; the Superman-Lois Lane serial in the latter. The serial ran for quite some time and emphasized the closeness of the couple. Bad things would happen, but nothing that would permanently mar the relationship.

As far as other heroes were concerned, marriage was not considered a dead end, either. Barry Allen had a mature relationship with Iris Allen, including an engagement and many happy years of wedded bliss, until Iris was killed off (and I think senselessly). Hawkman and Hawkgirl arrived on Earth already married. Aquaman got married, as did Mr. Fantastic, and both had children. And Ray

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Palmer wanted to get married from his first appearance; in his case it was the woman who wanted to establish herself first. (I'm not even going to mention the stupid death of Aquababy, but that doesn't reflect on the creative talent of the 1960s, but does on the current crop—as do the useless deaths of Batwoman, Batman of Earth-Two, Mr. Terrific, and Gwen Stacy.)

Finally, a few belated words about the article on the *"Batman"* ghosts which appeared a few issues ago. I remember how I refused to believe that the stories which I had thought were from Bob Kane's best periods—roughly the mid-1950s—were not his handiwork, but were drawn by other people! I don't recall when this was that I first began to accept the truth—how illusions die so hard when one is young—but quickly I noticed that I was able to recognize the hands of artists whom I knew from other features, like Moaney and Swan. Others were identified and their styles, once named, were easy to spot—like Dick Sprang and Jack Burnley (who, by the way, was not mentioned though he did some excellent work on the ***BATMAN*** Sunday strip reprinted in many of the annuals). Some styles were distinctive, but never identified. Is Lew Schwartz the fellow behind *"How to be The Batman"* and *"Man Behind the Red Hood"*? If so, you have identified for me an artist who never received a by-line.

I am also curious about Ray Burnley. (Is he related to Jack Burnley?) Can you identify some of the stories he inked over Swan on ***JIMMY OLSEN?*** Swan's work on that series looks different in the late 1950s from what appeared later on, but George Klein is usually credited as his inker.

Trying to pick out who did what from the 1964-8 period under Julie Schwartz should be somewhat easier than distinguishing the artists before that, but apparently the artistic hodge-podge under Kane's signature continued. It should be noted that no one received credit until 1968; however, the stories by Infantino and Gil Kane were not signed by B. Kane, and they were identified on the letters pages (both had styles which were identified as their own by that point, and could not have been hidden under the famous signature in any case). After 1968, Kane's name disappeared completely except for the reprints.

Are you sure ***BATMAN #197*** was by Stone? That issue looks a lot like ***DETECTIVE #373***, attributed to Springer.

You said that editor Schwartz never gave credit to Bob Kane in the lettercol, where it was important. Not so. In ***BATMAN #202***, he states that Sid Greene had inked over Bob Kane's pencils in a previous issue. (Which doesn't really prove that he had drawn it, but...)

Lastly, the art sample attributed to Win Mortimer is clearly by Curt Swan. Ever since the reprint in ***BATMAN #236*** incorrectly credited the story to Mortimer, I have been hoping that someone would set the record straight. If you look through the story, you'll see many indications of Swan's layouts, especially if you compare it to a contemporary story in ***SUPERBOY*** or one of the mystery mags. Only the faces look like someone was trying to homogenize the art to fit the *"Batman"* style.

(By the way, if any help is needed in the research, I'm ready to pitch in.)

Finally—we close—please expand your letter column, the absence of which is the major omission in **CF.** I hope you will be able to turn your spotlight on some of the greats of years past—like Burnley, Sprang, Boring, Fox, and Broome (yes, I plead guilty to DC leanings). And I hope you'll be able to get some of the silent creators to talk—including Julie Schwartz, Swan, Colan, or Infantino, or—all right, I won't continue the list.

But I'll end with the cover. Supes by Swan was one of the nicest pieces to appear by him in some time; my kudos to the colorist also.

A big "You're welcome!" to you, Paul, says Editor, Production Manager, and part-time Typesetter Richard Howell (typing these words.) We, too, thought that the final look of the Swan drawing was very pleasing—and don't forget, you can get your own copy (B&W though) by sending $1.00 to the Museum of Cartoon Art in Port Chester NY. Sorry to sound so mercenary, but we just can't thank those guys enough for their last-minute save on that cover.

While we're interested in promoting interchange between our readers, we're not so keen on spawning bile and invective, so unfortunately, a good deal of editing is being taken to prevent our letters pages from sounding just like the ones you described. As Peter Sanderson always says: "Reasonable people can disagree reasonably."

We're quite glad that you enjoyed the Cary Bates interview. We also think that Cary is under-rated, as is Caniff, and Leonard Starr, and, well...lots of our upcoming interviewees and/or article subjects. Your list of potential interview subjects was a lot like ours (except ours included Marvel people, too, and some of the newer professionals) as long as we're in charge here, from the sound of your interests, it sounds like you'll always find something to interest you in FEATURE. We hope you noticed both Nelson Bridwell and Murphy Anderson in this issue—and Kurt Schaffenberger is scheduled now, too.

As concerns the "Who Draws The Batman" article, we certainly wouldn't mind updating and/or correcting any information contained therein, however, we'll need help. Gene Reed, who did such a fine job on the original article, has not submitted anything to FEATURE in months, and we wouldn't be at all surprised to find that his indexing activities are keeping him too busy for additional "moonlighting." If you're reading this, though, Gene, and you want to pitch in again, be our guest.

That goes for any of you other art expert-kibitzers, too.

And you might also have mentioned in your examples of happy "Imaginary Stories" the "Mr. and Mrs. Superman" back-up feature (currently running in SUPERMAN FAMILY), which not only emphasized Superman and Lois' happiness as a couple, but their newly-developed working rapport as a team. Now that's a marriage.

ASSORTED NOTES

Or "Why This is a July Issue."

—Ted McLeod

Just when we thought that we had our cover date and our schedule straightened out, we discovered that our growing British sales require us to change the cover date on ***COMICS FEATURE*** one more time. So while this issue should have been cover dated "March, 1981" it actually reads "July, 1981." In part the four month leap in cover date is caused by a demand by British newsstand dealers that the issue be dated a month ***after*** the month it is supposed to be on sale in Britain (if you know why the English follow this cover date pattern, I wish you would explain it to me). Since each issue of ***COMICS FEATURE*** will have to be shipped to England we added an additional three months to the date to compensate for the time required to ship the magazines over there and pass them through customs.

Regular readers, though, have nothing to worry about. ***COMICS FEATURE*** will still appear every month and #10 really is the next issue. Even though the covers claim that four months have passed between the two issues, don't you believe it. ●

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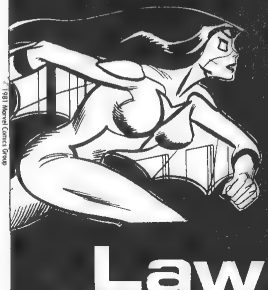
Marvel & The Law



Marvel Comics Group has recently been inundated with various trademark disputes. Marvel is very careful to trademark all of its titles and logos, but it has run into trouble with two of its more recent titles.

James Waley of Thunder Comics has recently entered into a dispute with Marvel Comics over the use of the character name "Paradox." According to Waley, although both his Paradox (a sorceror) and the Marvel character by the same name (who recently appeared in ***BIZARRE ADVENTURES***), were conceived independently, various staffers at the Marvel offices were made aware of Waley's character and its impending appearance long before the name of the Mantlo/mayerik character was certain. Indeed, claims Waley, in deference to his character's preeminent claim on the name Paradox, Lynn Graeme, the then-editor of the Marvel black and white line, printed in a bulletin page in ***BIZARRE ADVENTURES #23*** that Marvel had reconsidered their use of the name Paradox because someone else was already using it.

Varibus other reports were made in other organs of the fan press confirming that decision. However, when the magazine featuring the Mantlo/Mayerik character was finally released, it, and he, bore the name Paradox. Waley is attempting to gain a "reasonable financial settlement for the inconvenience" from Marvel, but his efforts have so far been unsuccessful. In a letter to Waley dated February 9, 1981, Jim Shooter expressed some doubt that anyone could copyright or trademark a word such as Paradox, "a Magician, a Stunman, a Rutabaga..." and that since Mantlo was in no way influenced by Waley's character, Marvel would more or less stick by their guns. Waley has not as yet announced any plans to further pursue the matter. When his character appears, however, it will not be named Paradox.

Also, Marvel Comics recently advised the Spiderwoman Theatre Workshop of New York that they considered their "use of the name to be an infringement of Marvel's trademark as well as a dilution of the distinctiveness of [the] Spiderwoman mark." In the same wire, the Marvel representative referred to their own Jessica Drew as "the cornerstone of a vast merchandising program...including entertainment services."

The eight women of the Spiderwoman Theatre Workshop were, understandably, nonplussed by the entire charge. According to Muriel Miguel, founder of the Workshop, in her statement to the press, the Spiderwoman (or Huzruiwuhti) is a Hopi goddess of the underworld, and has been part of the Hopi legends for over 5000 years. She supposedly represents "all the magic and mystery below...[and] the spirit of imperfection in a creative work." The Spiderwoman Theatre Workshop itself has been in existence for about six years.

According to ***THE VILLAGE VOICE***, Charles Brainard (an attorney who is advising Marvel Comics in this case), was "sympathetic but unmoved." He cited the basis of trademark law as being the ownership of the image that is created in the public's mind by any one word or phrase—and that allowing the Spiderwoman Theater Workshop to exist under its current label would undermine Marvel's marketing of their own character. Muriel Miguel retaliated with the inequities rampant in a law that supports exclusive use of names which have been public domain for centuries. She cited numerous tribal names and deities that are known by the general public as trademarks: Winnebago, Pontiac, Thunderbird. She observed "A company comes along and says, 'We own your legends.'"

Thea J. Kerman, assistant counsel to the Marvel Comics Group denied any particular motivation in Marvel's charge of trademark infringement was based on the fact that three members of the Spiderwoman Workshop were lesbians, and that some of their work includes lesbian overtones. ***THE VILLAGE VOICE*** reported that this was despite the "long history of conflict between Marvel and the gay community."

And in the continuing case over the ownership of Howard the Duck, former Marvel comics writer Steve Gerber has reported considerable favorable headway being made in his lawsuit against Marvel. Gerber states that he "won" the first round of litigations, and Marvel's subsequent appeal to reverse the decision was turned down.

SHOOTER CHANGES AVENGERS LINE-UP

REPLACES ESTABLISHED MEMBERS WITH "FAVORITE HEROES"

Jim Shooter takes over scripting ***THE AVENGERS*** with issue #211. He states that he will be doing a full script for #212 and following issues until ***AVENGERS*** artist Gene Colan becomes used to what he wants. Shooter will be changing The Avengers' line-up in keeping with his belief that The Avengers should consist of readers' "favorite heroes" who are already the "stars of other books." Hence Thor, Iron Man, and Captain America will remain with the team, but The Vision, The Scarlet Witch, and The Beast will leave. Shooter says that we will not be seeing Yellowjacket around much longer, but it is said that nothing lethal is being planned for the character. Rumors of Shooter's plans for the character, whom he terms "boring" include divorce from The Wasp, his wife of fifteen years (real time).

The upcoming change in the line-up supposedly is precipitated by the returning Moondragon, and many different characters will be considered for membership, not all of which will remain with the team. Possible members include The Angel, Iceman, Moon Knight, The Dazzler, Tigra the Were-Woman, and The Silver Surfer.

MARVEL DISBANDS MAGAZINE DEPARTMENT

There is no longer a Marvel magazine department. Ralph Macchio is now Denny O'Neil's assistant, and O'Neil will edit ***BIZARRE ADVENTURES. MARVEL UNIVERSE*** has not yet been assigned to an editor now that Lynn Graeme has left. The graphic novels will be each be assigned to different editors according to the nature of the individual project. Louise Jones will edit the ***X-MEN*** graphic novel, and Archie Goodwin will probably edit ***DREADSTAR,*** which is a spin-off from Jim Starlin's ***"Metamorphosis Odyssey.*** Goodwin may be editing other titles in the upcoming line of albums.

Denny O'Neil will take over editing ***MASTER OF KUNG FU*** and Al Milgrom will edit ***STAR TREK.***

MARVEL MERCHANDISING

An organization of scientists and intellectuals calling themselves the University of Hollywood has asked Marvel to produce a series of comic books for them that would be based on the work of famous scientists. These comics, which would be known as ***"The Titans Science Series,"*** would be distributed through college bookstores and comics specialty shops, but might also receive limited newspaper distribution. Currently, Steve Bissette is doing research and development on the project. Lynn Graeme was heading the project until she left Marvel; now Jim Shooter is supervising it in its initial stages. Marvel will have its own artists do the books.

Movie options have now been taken on Thor, The Silver Surfer (by Universal), Ghost Rider and Man-Wolf (both by Dino De Laurentiis), Daredevil and Howard the Duck (by a company called Selluloid). All, even Howard are planned to be done as live-action films, with the Duck being done as a puppet, as was done with Yoda.

Marvel has become involved in a promotion campaign for 7-11 that will include the giving away of free comics and the appearance of Marvel characters on Slurpee Cups.

SUPER SPECIAL UPDATE

PAPERBACK VERSIONS AND MINI-SERIES

RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK, FOR YOUR EYES ONLY, and ***DRAGONSLAYER*** will each appear as sixty-four page Super Specials. However, while the ***RAIDERS SUPER SPECIAL*** will have sixty pages of comics material, ***EYES*** and ***DRAGONSLAYER*** will each have only forty-eight, along with sixteen pages of articles and pictures. The ***RAIDERS*** adaptation will also be done as a three-issue four-color comics mini-series, while ***EYES*** and ***DRAGONSLAYER*** will appear as two-issue mini-series. Each adaptation may also be done as a Treasury if an exclusive buyer can be found. All three Super Specials have to be produced with hand-separated color due to the brevity of time before the release dates. The Marvel ***EYES*** and ***DRAGONSLAYER*** adaptations will also be published as mass-market paperbacks. The Super Special, Treasury, and paperback editions of these two adaptations will each be priced at $2.50. ***RAIDERS*** will not become a regular comics series as previously announced, and although Marvel still wants to do a regular ***"James Bond"*** comic, it may not become a reality either.

Marvel will also be doing Super Special adaptations of all three ***"Rocky"*** movies, timed for release of ***ROCKY III*** in December. Marvel Ltd. (Marvel's British division) is working on an adaptation of the forthcoming live action film ***THE TIME BANDITS,*** written and directed by Monty Python's animator Terry Gilliam, and it will be published in this country.

SPIRIT JAM

DIFFERENT ARTISTS' VERSIONS

THE SPIRIT magazine will be running a ***"Spirit Jam"*** story over thirty pages long, with different comics writers and artists working on different pages. At present the roll call consists of Marshall Rogers, Frank Miller, Harvey Kurtzman, Art Spiegelman, Trina Robbins, Steve Leialoha, Marie Severin, Len Wein, Mike Barr, Joe Staton, Ernie Colon, Tom Orzechowski, Denis Kitchen, Fred Hembeck, and, of course, Will Eisner himself.

Eisner will be doing new material for a regular feature in ***THE SPIRIT*** magazine entitled ***"Comics Laboratory Notebook."*** The first installment will have ***"Voices from the Planet Ferma,"*** which involves alien beings and is a continuation of Eisner's recent tale ***"The Public Interest,"*** and an illustrated version of Hamlet's "To be or not to be" soliloquy as delivered by a man with a switchblade on a tenement roof.

FANTAGRAPHICS EXPANDS TO FAN BOOKS

ELFQUEST, X-MEN PLANNED

Fantagraphics, the publisher of ***THE COMICS JOURNAL,*** has announced the upcoming publication of a pair of "companion volumes" to fan-favorite comics series. Each volume should feature "seventy to ninety" pages of new material, in a perfect-bound, white-paper package. The interiors will be in black and white, and the covers will be in color.

A frenzied fandom's favorite object of worship, ***THE X-MEN,*** will be the subject of one volume. It will be edited by former ***COMICS FEATURE*** Associate Editor Peter Sanderson, and should include interviews with as many of the major major staff members as are still alive, including creators Jack Kirby and Stan Lee. At presstime, however, only the Claremont and Byrne interviews were confirmed.

The other volume will spotlight Richard and Wendy Pini's ***ELFQUEST*** series, and will be edited by Dwight Decker. According to Fantagraphics Gary Groth, the book is planned to be a "companion book to the ***ELFQUEST*** series" with different views of the story and characters. There will be a new introduction by Richard and Wendy Pini, some unpublished artwork by Wendy, and several articles by, among others, Dwight Decker, J.J. Pierce, and Paula O'Keefe. There will be new color covers by Wendy Pini.

Also coming from Fantagraphics is a two-story volume featuring the writing of Jan Strnad. It will contain Strnad's ***"Sea Dragon"*** (with art by Dennis Fujitake) and ***"Goblin Child"*** with art by Mike Kaluta). It should run "about fifty" pages in length, according to Groth, and will be perfect-bound. Kaluta and Fujitake are each doing covers for the book.

PROMOTIONS AND RETIREMENTS AT DC

Sol Harrison has decided to take early retirement from DC and will be leaving the company in the middle of February. Harrison joined DC (then known as National) 38 years ago. Although Harrison will have no official connection with the company once he leaves, it is expected that he will still act as a consultant and kibitzer to DC whenever the company needs to draw upon his 50 years of experience with the comics industry.

Although Jenette Kahn will assume Harrison's old title of President and will retain her own current status as Publisher of DC Comics, many of Harrison's duties will be parceled out to Joe Orlando, Paul Levitz, and Jack Adler.

Joe Orlando, DC Comics Inc.'s Editorial Director, has been promoted to Vice President-Editorial Director. Orlando has been Editorial Director of DC since 1980, previous to which he had served as Managing Editor for five years, and Editor for another eight years.

DC's President and Publisher Jenette Kahn announced that "the promotion was made in recognition of the enormous range of creative contributions Mr. Orlando has made to DC during his fourteen years with the company, and of the unique responsibility he bears for the creative direction of our efforts in all fields." Citing some of Orlando's past accomplishments, Kahn mentioned ***JONAH HEX,*** the only enduring western hero in recent comics history, ***SWAMP THING,*** an award-winning comics series that is now the basis for a United Artists/Avco Embassy film, the very successful ***SUPERMAN POP-UP*** or ***MIX OR MATCH*** books, and the new ***SUPER HEROES SUPER HEALTHY COOKBOOK,*** which has received unprecedented critical acclaim for a comics-related project.

Levitz, currently DC's Manager of Business Affairs, will also assume responsibility for DC's circulation, licensing, and foreign sales to his already-heavy work load. In order to allow Levitz to have more time for his new duties, his assistant, Karen Berger has been promoted and will assume many of Levitz's traffic management duties.

Jack Adler, Vice-President of Production, will also assume increased control over printing, production, and now, advertising production.

Andrew Helfer, recently assigned to replace Jack C. Harris as fan press and publicity liaison at DC, is relinquishing the position to "return to my other full-time job as Joe Orlando's assistant with special projects." Helfer claimed that the publicity position was a full-time workload, and he was "always getting called away from one of Joe's projects to answer the phone and work on the publicity angles." Helfer will officially vacate the latter position as of March 1, 1981.

Taking Helfer's position as fan press liaison will be Roger Slifer, former production person and colorist for both DC and Marvel. Slifer also published and edited the ***MANHUNTER: THE COMPLETE STORY*** volume last year. His duties will include being DC's Manager of Direct Sales.

CANADIAN COMICS EXPAND

THUNDER COMICS BEGINS THUNDER TRIPLE FEATURE

Thunder Comics, a new Canadian company, is making ready a new line of fifty-cent titles for distribution in the US and Canada starting in early 1981. According to Thunder editor Jim Wiley, each book is in a four-color, forty-eight page format, with a twenty-page lead story, an eight-page back-up story, two pages of letters and comments, and eighteen pages of advertisements. Each title will appear on a bi-monthly schedule, and at this time three titles are definitely set: ***THE NORTHERN LIGHT***, ***ALI BABA***, and ***THUNDER TRIPLE FEATURE***.

THE NORTHERN LIGHT is a super-hero that first appeared in the pages of ***ORB COMICS***, a short-lived underground comic which appeared in the middle 1970s. The Northern Light is a being of pure energy, and has complete mastery over all forforms of light, including powerful lasers. He uses his skills for the Canadian defense organization known as ALERT, which investigates UFO sightings and possible alien invasions.

ALI BABA is a sword-and-sorcery hero based on the Arabian Knights tales. This strip will be set against a fanciful, ancient middle-eastern background.

THUNDER TRIPLE FEATURE will spotlight three different Thunder super-heroes every issue. Although no characters are definitely set for ***TRIPLE FEATURE*** now, one of the possibilities is The Lynx, who will be appearing in back-up features either in ***THE NORTHERN LIGHT*** or ***ALI BABA***.

COMELY AND COMELY BEGIN STAR RIDER

STAR RIDER AND THE PEACE MACHINE is the new title from Canadian writer/artist Richard Comely, best known for his creation Captain Canuck.

Comely's new series is set more than fifty years in the future. ***STAR RIDER*** is the story of Dr. Ian Davis, an idealistic young man who runs afoul of a secret organization of super-rich collectivists bent on global domination. To stop the collectivists from triggering a third world war, Davis must travel back through time to change events in the 1980s.

The first issue of ***STAR RIDER AND THE PEACE MACHINE*** is set for release in mid-February. It will be forty-eight pages with ads with a cover price of $1.25. It will be a large, magazine-sized tabloid printed in black and white, but with color covers.

Richard Comely, writer, illustrator, and publisher of ***STAR RIDER***, has gained great prestige among both Canadian and American fans as the creator and guiding light behind Captain Canuck. After selling out his interest in CKR (***CAPTAIN CANUCK***'S publishing company), Comely decided to strike out on his own, and—with his wife—has started a new firm, Comely and Comely. Their first publishing venture, ***STAR RIDER***, has already attracted great interest not only in fan circles, but several Canadian film producers have shown enthusiasm in developing the property as a feature-length movie. Though nothing is definite about it at this point, Comely has already started to work on a live film treatment, and reports that at this time, things look very hopeful.

MARVEL

Having taken on the Enchantress, Doctor Doom, and Nightmare, The Dazzler next battles The Hulk in issue #6 of her own comic. Shortly thereafter, she will be offered the position of herald to Galactus.

To help with Marvel's schedule problems, Dave Kraft was hired to serve as a temporary editor for two months (January and February). He has taken over editing a few series, including ***GHOST RIDER***. He has also edited several single issues of certain series, such as one ***MASTER OF KUNG FU***, and is editing several annuals, including the ***THOR ANNUAL***.

The Thing and Wonder Man team up against Xemnu the Titan in ***MARVEL TWO-IN-ONE #78***.

Iron Man is the next in line to fight Doctor Doom in issue #150 of the former's book. Doctor Doom will travel back to the time of King Arthur and ally himself with Morgan LeFay. Iron Man follows to prevent Doom from completing his plans in the past.

Star-Lord returns in ***MARVEL PREMIERE #61*** in a story by Doug Moench and Tom Sutton.

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the AVENGERS
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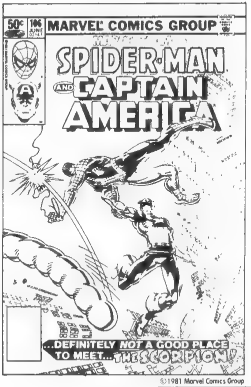
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SPIDER-MAN AND CAPTAIN AMERICA
..DEFINITELY NOT A GOOD PLACE TO MEET... THE SCORPION!
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Paladin returns in ***MARVEL TEAM-UP #108***.

Val Mayerik will draw the final issue of the second ***MAN-THING*** series, which, like the last issue of the first series, will feature Thog, the Nether-Spawn as its villain. The story-line involving ***WAR IS HELL's*** John Kowalski will be resolved in that issue, and there will be guest appearances by Marvel editors Jim Shooter and Louise Jones. Among the characters killed in the story are the sorceress Jennifer Kale, Doctor Strange, and the story's writer, Chris Claremont.

Jim Shooter will not take over writing ***CAPTAIN AMERICA*** at this time, but he has plotted an issue to be scripted by Doug Moench.

The Hulk battles a Dire Wraith (from ***ROM***) in issue #262 of ***THE INCREDIBLE HULK***.

Mephisto replaces Thor in a story by Doug Moench, Keith Pollard, and Gene Day, in issue #310 of the Thunder God's series.

STAR TREK has gone bi-monthly with issue #14 so as to allow Tom Palmer to remain on the book as inker. ***SPIDER-WOMAN***, which has had deadline problems throughout its run, has also gone bi-monthly, but only temporarily until it gets back on schedule.

The Torpedo returns in ***ROM #21***.

Gil Kane did the art for ***STAR TREK #15***.

MARVEL

Tom DeFalco is now editor of the three ***"Spider-Man"*** books, ***MICRONAUTS, WHAT IF?, GHOST RIDER*** (probably beginning with issue #61; Dave Kraft is currently editing it), and the reprint books ***MARVEL TALES*** and ***SGT. FURY.*** Mark Gruenwald is his assistant. DeFalco served for years as editor at Archie Comics, although John Goldwater officially holds the title of editor.

Denys Cowan will soon become regular penciller on ***MASTER OF KUNG FU.***

This year's ***X-MEN ANNUAL,*** written by Chris Claremont and drawn by Brent Anderson, features the Fantastic Four, Arkon, and The Brotherhood of the Badoon. Its title: ***"Oo La La Badoon."***

DAREDEVIL #172 reveals the fate of The Kingpin's wife and begins a long storyline that will weave its way through many Marvel series.

Background inkers for the ***"Superman/Spider-Man"*** story on sale in April (officially designated ***MARVEL TREASURY #28***) include Terry Austin, Walt Simonson, Joe Rubinstein, Al Milgrom, Bob Wiacek, Steve Leialoha, Bob McLeod, and Klaus Janson. Figures in the story were inked by Joe Sinnott. The cover is a painting by Bob Larkin and is based on a pencil layout of John Buscema's. This second pairing of the top-selling heroes from each company will again portray both heroes living on the same Earth. They will team up against Doctor Doom and The Parasite, and show Clark Kent and Peter Parker working at each other's newspapers.

"Riders to Galaxy's End" will not appear in ***EPIC #6.*** In its place will be a fiction piece by Ron Goulart, ***"Bugg Lives,"*** illustrated by Phoebe Berry, and a comics story, ***"No Laughing Matter"*** written by Roger McKenzie and drawn by Mark Bright.

BIZARRE ADVENTURES #27 will be a horror story issue, and issue #28 will contain a Red Sonja story by Chris Claremont and John Bolton, who did the King Kull story in #26.

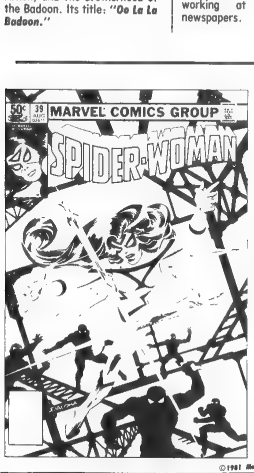
STAR WARS #50 will be double-sized. Its story is entitled ***"The Crimson Forever."***

Another Roy Thomas ***"Conan"*** story will appear in ***SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN #66.*** The art is by Ernie Colon and Ernie Chan.

MARVEL PREMIERE has been cancelled; number 61 was the final issue.

Dave Kraft is editing the following annuals: ***CAPTAIN AMERICA,*** by David Michelinie, Gene Colan, and Dave Simons; ***MARVEL TWO-IN-ONE,*** written by Doug Moench and pencilled by Ron Wilson, featuring Ka-Zar, Klaw, Wyatt Wingfoot, and a new character called The American Eagle (a different character than the one who appeared in ***THE AVENGERS #85, 148***); ***THE AVENGERS,*** by Chris Claremont and Mike Golden, featuring the return of Ms. Marvel; and ***FANTASTIC FOUR*** scripted by Ed Hannigan and pencilled by Steve Ditko, entitled ***"The Coming of Dragon Lord."*** Kraft's assistant is former Marvel traffic manager Hellen Katz.

SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN #65 features ***"Fangs of the Serpent"*** drawn by Gil Kane and written by Michael Fleisher, and ***"Brent the Barbarian,"*** whose plot and art are both by John Buscema, with a script by J. Marc DeMatteis.



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EPIC #6 will have a cover by Barry Windsor-Smith, a sixteen-page story written and drawn by Neal Adams entitled ***"Holocaust,"*** two more chapters of ***"Metamorphosis Odyssey, "Eyes,"*** by Pepe Moreno, ***"U.F.O.,"*** written and illustrated by Tim Conrad, two illustrated Franz Kafka fables by Leo Duranona entitled ***"Before the Law"*** and ***"The Messenger,"*** and possibly a ***"Weirdworld"*** story written by Doug Moench and perhaps drawn by John Buscema. (Of all the above, only ***"U.F.O."*** is in black and white.)

Jim Shooter did the layouts and Jim Mooney the finished art for ***PETER PARKER, THE SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN #56,*** in which Spider-Man battles Jack O'Lantern, late of ***MACHINE MAN.***

Marvel's ***SAINT FRANCIS*** book sold very well, and Marvel will be doing another project with the Franciscans.

DC

Cary Bates will dialogue the third part of Len Wein and Dan Spiegle's ***"Bat Lash"*** back-up.

BRAVE AND BOLD #178, featuring Batman and The Creeper, will be scripted by Alan Brennert. Art is by Jim Aparo.

THE PHANTOM ZONE mini-series, edited by Dick Giordano, has found a scripter: Steve Gerber. No artist had been chosen as of press date.

The ***superman's FORTRESS OF SOLITUDE*** tabloid written by Roy Thomas, will feature art by Ross Andru and Romeo Tanghal. It will be 64 pages long and be "loaded with full-page and double-page illustrations."

Roy Thomas' ***ALL-STAR SQUADRON*** will premiere as a bonus section in the ***JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA*** on sale in May. The following month, its first issue will be released. The art will be by Rich Buckler and newcomer Jerry Ordway, and the strip is edited by Len Wein.

Joe Orlando and Michael Fleisher will design and write the ***SUPERMAN II—THE MOVIE BOOK.***

The creative team on ***THE KRYPTON CHRONICLES*** will be E. Nelson Bridwell and long-time ***"Superman"*** artist Curt Swan.

AND SO THE WINNER, THOUGH NOT EXACTLY BY A NOSE, IS--
"WONDER WOMAN!" "HURRAY!"
HELP STAMP OUT POLIO!
I REALLY FEEL STRANGE ABOUT THIS, BOYS--EVEN THOUGH WE WERE ONLY RACING FOR CHARITY!
AFTER ALL, EVERYBODY KNOWS THAT THE FLASH IS THE "FASTEST MAN ALIVE"!
YOU DON'T HAND BACK AND LET ME WIN, DO YOU?
YOU CAN ASK THAT--WHEN YOU'RE NOT EVEN WINDED?
FIN
©1981 DC Comics

David Michelinie and Walt Simonson will team up to present more adventures of Robert Kanigher's ***"Captain Fear."*** The multi-part mini-series will appear in consecutive issues of ***UNKNOWN SOLDIER,*** beginning with #254.

Roy Thomas will script ***LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES #278,*** over a plot by Gerry Conway. With the following issue, Thomas takes over the full writing chores on the series.

Batman will soon encounter The Sportsman in ***BATMAN #338.*** The villain's arsenal will include explosive hockey pucks and tennis rackets with razor-sharp edges. The Sportsman is based on an idea of Roy Thomas' to re-create a sports-gimmick-y super-villain reminiscent of the Golden Age Green Lantern's foe The Sportsmaster.

SUPERMAN FAMILY #209, the first monthly issue of that title, will include a Supergirl story by Jack C. Harris, Marv Wolfman, Win Mortimer, and Vince Colletta, in which the Maid of Might has to stop an all-out riot at Yankee Stadium. Its title: ***"Strike Three...You're Out!"*** Also in that issue will be a ***"Mr and Mrs. Superman"*** feature which will solve the mystery of the disappearance of Clark Kent's first editor (from ***ACTION #1***).

The Terminator will return in ***TEEN TITANS #10,*** courtesy of the series' regular team of creators: Marv Wolfman, George Perez, Romeo Tanghal, and editor Len Wein.

The origin of The Red Tornado is concluded in ***JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA #193,*** in the ***"Secret of Genesis."*** The story is by presently-regular ***JLA*** creators Gerry Conway and George Perez, with inking by newcomer John Beatty.

GENERAL

CBS has apparently been dislodged as the reigning king of Saturday morning television ratings. For three consecutive weekends in the latter part of January and the first week of February, ABC's ***RICHIE RICH, SCOOBY-DOO,*** and ***FONZ AND THE HAPPY DAYS GANG*** have beaten out long-time champ ***BUGS BUNNY*** on CBS. Also, ABC's ***THUNDARR THE BARBARIAN*** has gained an impressive ratings lead on CBS's formerly-unbeatable ***POPEYE*** hour, garnering 33² of the viewing audience compared to the animated sailor's 24% on CBS.

• • •

Filmways Pictures has sold its controlling interest in Ruby-Spears, the west-coast animation studio that produces ***THUNDARR THE BARBARIAN, PLASTIC MAN,*** and ***HEATHCLIFF,*** among other series. Taking over ownership of the company will be Taft Broadcasting, which boasts among its other satellite companies Hanna-Barbera Productions and Tandem Productions ***(DIFF'RENT STROKES, FACTS OF LIFE).***

Independent comix artist and Hanna-Barbera draftsman Scott Shaw is making progress in his suit against Filmation Studios. Shaw contests that a series of cartoons produced by Filmation about a vampire duck named Quackula (which were broadcast during the 1979-80 Saturday morning season) were directly inspired by Shaw's own comix creation Duckula. As both cartoon characters wore capes, spoke with quasi-Lugosi accents, and had simple-minded bear side-kicks, it is easy to see how such a suit might have arisen. Shaw, however, has been drawing his vampire duck character since 1976, giving him a three-year lead on Filmation, and also a stronger case. Filmation has reportedly been making offers of a settlement.

• • •

Art Spiegelman counsels impressionable gum card collectors that there are only eight different cards in the series currently being included in copies of Spiegelman's ***RAW*** magazine, not eighty-eight as reported elsewhere. ***RAW #1,*** incidentally, is "just about sold out," and #2 is selling very well, too.

UNDERGROUNDS FROM LAST GASP

COMMIES FROM MARS #3 explores the phenomenon of the invaders from the Red Planet who bring ideological purity and intergalactic tourism. This third issue is described as "the best issue yet—No hackneyed cliches, just plain old-fashioned comix provde" from editor Tim Boxell, Shawn Kerri, S. Clay Wilson, Ripp, Peter Kuper, Greg Irons, Ian James, Jon Rich, J. Michael Leonard, and Revilo. John Pound painted the cover.

TITS & CLITS #6 features "fearless and funny explorations of sensuality" from lesbian bondage to Beowulf. It features Roberta Gregory, Beverly Hillard, Keren Feinberg, Ruth Lynn, Comicazie, Sharon Rudahl, Rocky Trout, Chris Powers, and Lee Mars.

SAN FRANCISCO COMIC BOOK #6 features the utter destruction of San Francisco as the entire communtiy is nuked for good. Gary Arlington, Joel Beck, Spain, Justin Green, and others are along for the ride.

All of the above will cost $1.50 each. ***SFCB #6*** will contain 48 pages.

©1981 London Daily Mail

Ken Pierce is publishing two volumes of ***MODESTY BLAISE*** stories by Peter O'Donnell and Jim Holdaway that have never before been published in this country. The first volume in the series will contain the seventh and eighth ***BLAISE*** stories, ***"The Vikings"*** and ***"Top Traitor."***

It will appear under the series title, ***"First American Edition Series."*** It will be square bound, contain 64 pages, and cost $5.95.

THE COMIC TIMES is changing its name to ***MEDIA SHOWCASE.*** Both titles will appear on issues beginning with number five, but the ***MEDIA SHOWCASE*** logo will become larger with each issue until finally ***THE COMIC TIMES*** logo is dropped altogether.

FANTASY EMPIRE, NMP's newest commentary magazine has been shipped to the printers. The first issue should appear in comics specialty shops by late March.

The first issue features a complete season guide to the popular ***DOCTOR WHO.***

ELFQUEST IN COLOR

Richard and Wendy Pini's popular ***ELFQUEST*** series has been contracted by Donning Company for a full-color reprint. The first ***ELFQUEST*** volume published by Donning will contain the story contents of ***ELFQUESTs*** #1-5, but augmented by full, photo-separated color. It has been no secret that the Pinis have been showing the black and white ***ELFQUEST*** comics to various publishers for several years, yet despite some encouraging offers, they decided to hold our and wait for the publisher who would offer them color printing.

Donning Company has also published other fantasy-related material, such as Michael Whelan's ***WONDERWORKS,*** but ***ELFQUEST*** will be its first foray into color comics, ***per se.***

The coloring will be done by Wendy herself, and will be accomplished with the aid of some subtle redrawing to accomodate the greater range of effects (such as the fire scenes from issue #1).

The release date for ***ELFQUEST—THE BOOK*** has not yet been announced, but the Pinis hope to have it ready for release before the end of the year. It will run over 150 pages long and sport color covers.

© 1981 WaRP Graphics

IN THE
COMICS & COMIX
CONFERENCE ROOM
YOU HEARD ME, BOYS! WE'RE GONNA RUN A COUPON AD OFFERING 1/3 OFF ON ALL MERCHANDISE IN ALL OF OUR STORES!
STOP CRYING AND START PACKING, PLANT.. IT LOOKS LIKE LOTS OF OVERTIME FOR YOUR WAREHOUSE!
YOUR VACATION CAN WAIT, BUSER. WE'LL NEED LOTS OF POSTERS, CARDS AND BUTTONS, AND GET ME MORE CIGARS WHILE YOU'RE AT IT!
NO BUTS BARRETT! I WANT ALL THE STORES SPIC 'N SPAN BY APRIL 1ST!
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BO BOSS
DO YOU HEAR ME, MAPLE? BETTER START UPPING OUR NEW COMIC ORDERS, NOW!
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SORRY, SWAN, YOUR PRIZED GOLDEN AGE COMICS MUST GO AT 1/3 OFF TOO, EVEN IF IT COMES OUT OF YOUR BEER BUDGET!
CHOKE
PFFTTTTT!!!
BUSER! SIMON

1/3 OFF? YES, C+C WILL TRY ANYTHING TO GET NEW OUT-OF-TOWNERS AND DIE-HARD MAIL-ORDER COLLECTORS INTO OUR STORES (NOT TO MENTION KEEPING OUR ALERT LOYAL CUSTOMERS HAPPY!!) HERE'S THE ONLY CATCH: YOU CAN USE THE 1/3 OFF COUPON ONLY ONCE IN ONLY ONE OF OUR STORES! SO MAKE IT COUNT! PUT THESE JOKERS TO WORK!

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Clerk will request I.D. for verification. Upon your request, we will add your name and address to the C+C mailing list.

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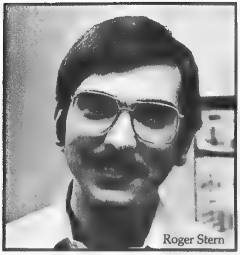
ALL APRIL LONG!!

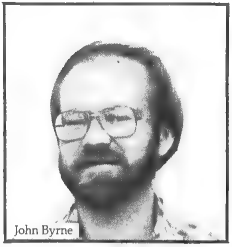
THE CAPTAIN AMERICA

THAT NEVER WAS!



Roger Stern

all characters ©1981 Marvel Comics Group



John Byrne

Many ***CAPTAIN AMERICA*** fans were bitterly disappointed when the book's popular creative team, Roger Stern and John Byrne, announced they had decided to leave the book. Both creators were unhappy about leaving the series since they had both enjoyed both revitalizing the series's concept and the enthusiastic reader response which resulted from their work. Unfortunately Stern's decision to leave the series due to scheduling demands ended his participation with the book as of the fortieth anniversary issue, ***CAPTAIN AMERICA #255.*** John Byrne subsequently decided to leave the book as well if Stern was no longer writing the series.

The creators' decision to leave the title dashed many readers' hopes of seeing further Stern-Byrne stories. However what most fans did ***not*** know was that one last Stern-Byrne story had already been begun and partially pencilled before the two men decided to move on to other projects. Six pages of what would have been ***CAPTAIN AMERICA #257*** were plotted and pencilled and have remained unpublished until now.

According to Roger Stern, he and Byrne and planned on an elaborate three-issue storyline which would have begun in #257. Stern had come up with a plot which finally accounted for many of the characters introduced and last seen during Jack Kirby's last stint on the book. Donna Maria Santiago, Hector Santiago a.k.a. The Swine, Arnim Zola, Doughboy, and the Red Skull would each have made appearances in the story.

Stern and Byrne had planned to picked up where they had left off in issue #255. Captain America would still be in England following his battle with the revived Baron Blood and his reunion with former Invaders member, Lady Jacqueline a.k.a. Spitfire. Issue #257 would have seen Cap leave England via an experimental solar-powered dirigible, the CHURCHILL. ***En route*** back to the States, Cap would have been subjected to a series of mysterious attacks. Ultimately the readers would have discovered that the attacks had been masterminded by Hector Santiago, The Swine, last seen being eaten by a monster in issue #208 and believed dead since then. Stern would have revealed that Arnim Zola, the bizarre bio-fanatic, had cloned a second Hector Santiago from the shredded remains of the first. Arnim himself, accompanied by his creations Primus and Doughboy, would have made an surprise appearence at the end of the first issue in time to kidnap Cap from the dirigible. The Red Skull would have ultimately put in an appearance. Stern and Byrne had concocted an elaborate act of international terrorism planned by the Red Skull to be the conclusion to the three-part story.

Unfortunately, none of Stern's and Byrne's plans for the book will see print. The book's editor Jim Salicrup stated that "it [was] very unlikely that any of their plans [would] be carried out."

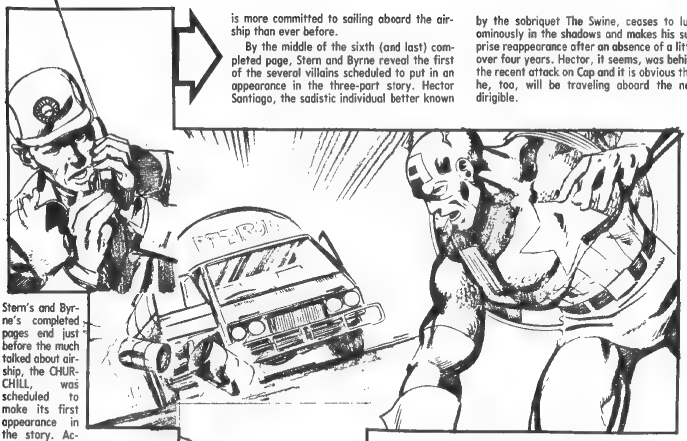
The following pages contain several scenes from the six pages that were partially finished last summer. None of the material was inked before Stern and Byrne left the series so these scenes are shot from Byrne's finished pencils. The running commentary and plot synopsis is drawn from Stern's script. This is a rare opportunity to see what the two men would have done with the series if they had not left the book.

#257 would have begun with a phone call. Cap, already at London's Heathrow airport, would have called Bernadette Rosenthal via the trans-Atlantic telephone system. The second page (from which these panels are taken) begins with Cap actually connecting with Bernie. A brief exchange of pleasantries follows during which Cap explains that he should be arriving back in New York soon. Cap rings off as he is approached by his three companions, Lady Jacqueline, her son Ken, and his friend Joey Chapman.

While these first two pages lack any action scenes, they still provide the reader with a great deal of very important background information. Due to the break in continuity caused by issue #255, the special 40th anniversary celebration, the the reader had to be brought up to date as to the time and place of #257. The phone call to Bernie allowed Stern to not only remind the readers that Cap was still in England but also that the action of #257 takes place almost immediately after the action in #255. Page three featured a flashback to the battle with Baron Blood that formed the climax of issue #255. Stern also paced the story to allow for a number of "talking heads" panels (not pictured) which allowed him to explore the possibility of Joey Chapman assuming the role of Union Jack. Again Stern was very careful to catch the reader up with what had happened in the two-part Baron Blood story and to tidy up any loose ends that might still have been left over from the conclusion of issue #255.

Page four would have been the real beginning of the proposed three-part Hector Santiago-Arnim Zola-Red Skull plot. The top of the page features a three panel sequence where unidentified men plot to kill Cap and his companions by means of a runaway fuel truck. Naturally enough by the beginning of page six, Cap has managed to rescue Lady Jacqueline from being crushed by the out-of-control vehicle, to steer the truck away from any endangered people or buildings, and to force the truck to collide into a conviently placed near-by barrier wall. Byrne ended page five with a very satisfying explosion as the truck careens into the wall. The beginning of page six, however, offers the reader visual reassurance that Cap managed to leap to safety mere moments before the truck impacted against the wall. However, despite all this activity, Stern managed to impart some much-needed information to the reader. Cap, it seems, was scheduled to return to the United States via a free trip aboard the maiden voyage of a new type of airship. Cap's participation in the air-cruise was arranged by an unknown party and it's possible that his participation in the voyage would have been an important part of the Red Skull's latest plot against the world.

The attempt on Cap's life, however, causes the Avenger to believe that someone is trying to sabotage the new airship, and as a result he



is more committed to sailing aboard the airship than ever before.

By the middle of the sixth (and last) completed page, Stern and Byrne reveal the first of the several villains scheduled to put in an appearance in the three-part story. Hector Santiago, the sadistic individual better known by the sobriquet The Swine, ceases to lurk ominously in the shadows and makes his surprise reappearance after an absence of a little over four years. Hector, it seems, was behind the recent attack on Cap and it is obvious that he, too, will be traveling aboard the new dirigible.

Stern's and Byrne's completed pages end just before the much talked about airship, the CHURCHILL, was scheduled to make its first appearance in the story. According to Stern, they had planned to have the seventh page be a dramatic full-page shot of the thousand-foot-long, solar powered dirigible. Byrne had been just about to start work on the page when Stern announced his intention to leave the strip. Byrne's subsequent decision to also leave the series meant that the Churchill was never drawn and that the story was left in limbo.

Although only six pages of pencils had been completed for the three-part series, Byrne had already worked up a number of models and costume sketches related to the three-part story. The Red Skull's new pseudo-S.S. uniform (based upon a suggestion by Cory Vandernet) on our cover is one of these. had

Stern's and Byrne's departure from the book ended any chance that their elaborate storyline would ever see print as a Marvel comic. Fortunately for fans of their work, ***COMICS FEATURE*** was allowed to reveal the hither-to untold tale of the ***CAPTAIN AMERICA*** issue that would have been.●

Book Captain America Issue# 257 pg# 5/x

MEMORIES FROM

THE AMERICAN DREAM

March, 1981 is the fortieth anniversary of Captain America. For many comics fans the character still remains one of the most striking and memorable characters ever to have their adventures chronicled in four-color. Originally created in 1941 by the now legendary team of Joe Simon and Jack Kirby, the character has always been presented more as a symbol of the American Dream and a representative of a particular ideological position than have most other comics characters. ***COMICS FEATURE*** talked with Joe Simon at the Newcon convention held in Boston, MA last Novemeber and recorded his reminiscences about how Captain America came to be, the way *he* remembers developing the character, and what meaning *he* believes Captain America holds for today's readers.

☆ ★ ☆

"Let me tell you first about how we created Captain America...This country was not at war [Captain America's first appearance in March of 1941 preceded by seven months the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor which precipated America's entry into World War II]. Yes, there was a war over in Europe, but there was a lot of controversy in this country about whether we should get involved. There was a lot of opposition...lots of demostrations and marches and rallies by the America First Group, the American Nazi Party, the Nazi Fund. The opponents to the war were all quite well organized. We wanted to have our say, too. We didn't want to go to war, but we felt very intense about what was going on over in Europe. So we had this new character, Captain America, reflect our attitudes about the war. He didn't want to fight, but he knew that the Nazis had to be stopped and he was prepared to do his best to stop them.

When the first issue came out we got a lot of bad mail, a lot of threatening letters and hate mail. Some people really opposed what Cap stood for. I could never understand that because he stood for America—Freedom and justice. How can anybody be against that? But anyway after the first issue we got so many threats that for a while we had a police man in the office watching over us. It was kind of funny. There we were working on a comic book and there was this guard making sure that we weren't attacked or something.

I guess we did quite a bit to promote patriotism in this country. We felt very good about making a political statement through [Cap] and taking a stand. It was a bit frightening, though, what with all the reaction we got. The book sold well, it was a tremendous success so that proved we had more friends than enemies.

We often used Adolph Hitler as our prime villain. Now other companies had been doing very well with colorful villains—The Batman in particular had the Penguin and the Joker—but we wanted to use a real live villain. Cap might have been only a symbol but we wanted him to fight a real menace, something that was a real threat to our country. So we used Adolph Hitler. We had him on the first couple of covers. Captain America was always crashing through windows and beating him up.

Captain America was very much a reflection of his times. He was patriotic when the country was patriotic. He was willing to fight for his country when his country was getting ready to get into a horrible war. We saw him as a political statement fleshed out to be an active force. We would have him go through an exaggerated adventure and his actions and the story would all be making a political statement.

I don't know what I'd do if I had to do him today. I've lost touch with the book. I haven't read it for a long time. I'm still not too happy over [losing the copyright to the character]. [Joe Simon attempted to renew the copyright to the character when it came due to be

RED SKULL'S DEADLY REVENGE!
STORY BY STAN LEE ART BY JACK KIRBY AL AVISON
EVEN THE CELLS OF THE LIVING DEAD CANNOT SERVE TO HOLD THE MOST FEARSOME KILLER OF ALL TIME! NEVER HAVE CAPTAIN AMERICA AND BUCKY SO NEAR TO DESTRUCTION AS NOW, WHEN THE DEADLY RED SKULL RETURNS TO TRACK THEM WITH HIS ARROWS OF DOOM!
CAPTAIN
©1981 Marvel Comics Group

Even after the departure of the Simon & Kirby team, the *CAPTAIN AMERICA* series continued to display their

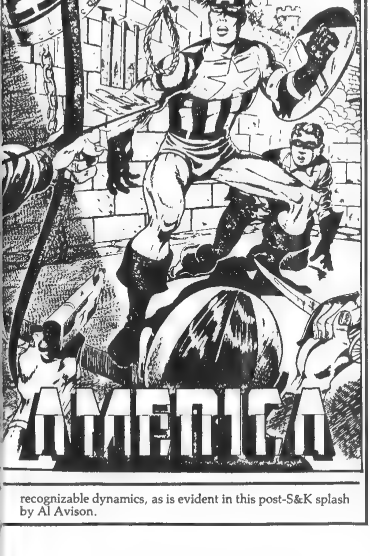
TWO—HIS ORIGIN AND THE BASIS OF HIS APPEAL

JOE SIMON

. . . COMIC TRUE

article by Carol Kalish

renewed in the late 1950's.] I lost a lot of money and I felt cheated. It is ver painful to see the book. It doesn't even have my name on it—you know, created by Joe Simon and Jack Kirby, something like that. The companies are living off these characters. They make a lot of money from licensing, television, movies, and toys, but they won't even give credit to the guys whose idea it was in the first place.



recognizable dynamics, as is evident in this post-S&K splash by Al Avison.

I've worked with other patriotic characters. Jack [Kirby] and I did the ***BOY COMMANDOS*** for DC and we later did ***FIGHTING AMERICAN***, which was a take-off of Captain America. The kid gang book did very well. It was a tremendous success, but it didn't have the ingrediants to last through the gaes the way Captain America does. It might be because he has the uniform and is the patriotic symbol, but one can't ever really be sure. I don't think so, though, I think it's something more, something unique to the character. You see, we also used a camp, patriotic costume for Fighting American, and he also was a patriotic symbol. We enjoyed doing him, but he never caught on the way Captain America did. He was always a marginal character. That's why I think there must be something special about the Cap character. No matter how times change, there are always kids who want to read about his adventures.

But anyway, to get back to Captain America...I guess I'd have to first read it and see what he's been doing all these years. I haven't followed the book so I don't know what people have had him do or have been doing to him. I think the important thing would be to keep him contemporary. Get him involved in adventures based on real world events. See, Captain America is the expression of the American ideal. He stands for what America should do if we could do anything we wanted. He's our nation's wish fulfillment.

For plots I guess I'd draw on all the interesting things going on in the world that you could turn into the springboard for a story. I'd probably have him get involved with real things: the hostage thing, terrorism, streets gangs, that sort of thing. I would get him involved with what is really going on today.

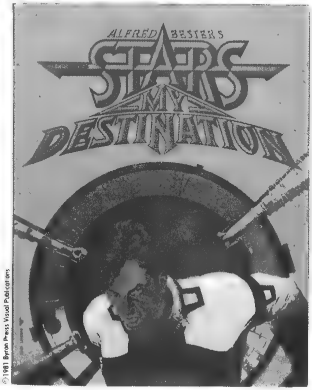
The character has a real pull. It's been around too long just to be tied to one time period. He can be adapted to fit into any situation, any social climate. He's a reflection of **us**. I think he's our ultimate fantasy. He's a comic book character, an ideal, a political statement, whatever, who can get involved in an adventure that involves real contemporary problems. Superman can't fight a mugger because he's too strong. He has to fight aliens and things. But Captain America is just like **us**. He can fight a mugger and it would be an exciting adventure fantasy that really has meaning because it is still real, still familiar. I think that is the key to the character. I think that is why there is still a Captain America."

☆★☆

Joe Simon is currently acting as a consultant for Harvey Publications and is also working finishing his personal memoirs of the comics industry.

Along with Jack Kirby, Simon was responsible for the creation of several of comics most enduring genre series including ***YOUNG ROMANCE*** and ***YOUNG LOVE***, the first romance comics, ***BOY'S RANCH***, which many comics critics and professionals have cited as one of the single best series ever to have emerged from the medium, ***BLACK MAGIC***, an influencial horror/suspense title, and several "Kid Gang" series, a type of comic invented and proliferated by the creative duo. The Simon & Kirby comics legacy is both rich and immense. The dynamic character of Captain America offers further evidence, if such is needed, of the inventive genius of his creators.●

FRANK MILLER



HOWARD CHAYKIN

COMICS FEATURE: Who were the original four members and how long ago was the studio founded?

CHAYKIN: We moved in in November, two years ago. November '78. It was Walter, Jim Starlin, Val Moyerik, and me. And there was originally going to be Jim (Sherman) and not Walter, and then Walter, and it just got very confusing; we found this place—Sherman was vacillating about something. We found the joint and took it. Since Sherman moved in, the tone of the joint has taken a turn—(Laughter from Simonson)—

SIMONSON: It's been upgraded, I think.

CHAYKIN: Yeah, really. We're not going to let Sherman talk about it, we're going to talk about it as if Sherman's not here.

SHERMAN: No comment. (Laughter)

CHAYKIN: And—that's about it.

FEATURE: Okay, and—

CHAYKIN: ***Everybody*** wants to be a member.

SIMONSON: In fact when we first moved in here, I didn't move in for about seven months. I rented the space, because as it happened just when we got this area and began moving in, I got the ***ALIEN*** job for ***HEAVY METAL.*** I had never worked in a studio situation with other people around—I just wasn't sure that I could do it. I knew ***ALIEN*** was going to be an ass-busting amount of work in an extremely short space of time, and I was afraid to move in here and discover I couldn't work in a studio situation. So I didn't move in for almost six months until late April in '79. And during that time there were many many inquiries into whether or not I'd be willing to give up the empty space that I was renting, and turn it over to somebody else.

CHAYKIN: On a commercial level, it's probably the lowest-priced working space in town.

SHERMAN: Is it?

SIMONSON: It's real good.

CHAYKIN: There's nowhere else in the city, on any level of business, where you can get a space as low-priced as this.

FEATURE: So how do you guys find it working in a studio now? Do you affect each other when you work?

SIMONSON: We all put on blinders and earplugs and don't talk to anybody.

MILLER: I just moved in here a couple of weeks ago, and...

SIMONSON: ...already he's doing square sound effects.

MILLER: After a rough adjustment that took about a week, I noticed that my attitude toward my work had improved. It was no longer the thing I fell asleep looking at and woke up looking at. And so I actually looked forward to work, and my productivity's increasing.

CHAYKIN: I was in the middle of the second volume of ***THE STARS MY DESTINATION,*** and I was hating the job, I didn't care, whether I would find working in a studio situation would put me through any grief. I had to get out, I was getting berserk, and I found it real comfortable. I found I was less affected by the presence of Val and Jim. I think I affected them, because when they came in, neither of them were working in process color, and when they left, both of

Although the concept of a studio for comics artists is far from a recent development, in recent years the practice has come back into vogue among the younger comics professionals.

upstart

them were. Having Simonson around is a profound influence, because he's a guy whose work I respect a great deal. And we get along pretty well on a lot of professional matters. Jim?

SHERMAN: Having a studio gives you a place to go to do your work and get away from having it mixed up in your personal life. I like being able to go home at night, and not having to look at the thing that I've been working on...

MILLER: I think that's the crux of the matter.

SHERMAN: It's also opened up my personal life a lot, leaving me time for a social life.

MILLER: Every artist that I know who works in his apartment, his apartment is just a working space. If it's several rooms, even if it's a living room and a den and a bedroom and a work room: there are books about his work lying on his dinner table. In my apartment, this mound of paper would just grow and grow and grow into other rooms...

CHAYKIN: You start finding stuff piled on top of the TV.

MILLER: And they are constant reminders of a very intense part of the day. What I've gotten into lately are very placid evenings. Like watching TV.

CHAYKIN: You see, underneath all this sort of...

SIMONSON: ...revolutionary artistic exterior...

CHAYKIN: ...we're really bourgeois. (Laughter all around.)

SIMONSON: Middle class!

CHAYKIN: Four of your **real** middle-class guys!

SIMONSON: But that's what being a child of the Sixties is all about.

CHAYKIN: When all the rhetoric is done, it's go home, have dinner, watch television, play with the cat, play with the kid, do something stupid, go to sleep.

MILLER: One thing that Denny O'Neil has mentioned to me that after working in fantasy all day, he tended to take baths in reality by reading newspapers, and reading books about real things. I've started to do that, too.

SHERMAN: When you've got a studio, you go there, you do your work, you go home, and when you go home, you can pay attention to your kids and your wife or whoever's there, instead of ignoring them. If something's going bad, you'll go to the drawing board and not face reality.

CHAYKIN: Here you're saturated without getting crazy, because there's very little intensity.

SIMONSON: Except for the past Summer.

CHAYKIN: Yeah.

SIMONSON: Which was intense from May on. Frank—I'll embarass you—tell us about the past week or so.

MILLER: About deadlines?

CHAYKIN: It's been a berserk Summer.

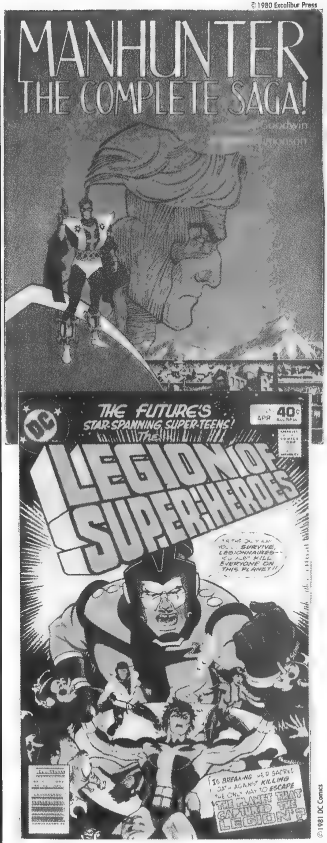
SIMONSON: When Frank first moved in, he came to believe that none of us ever left. That all of us always were (General laughter)...

MILLER: I keep fairly long hours. My first week here, I'd come in in the morning and these three guys would be here. And I'd leave in the evening, and every one of them would

Peter Sanderson and Peter Gillis interviewed the Upstart Studio members in late Autumn, 1980. The interview was transcribed by Gillis, read and approved by interviewers and interviewees alike, and final-edited by Richard Howell.

studios

WALT SIMONSON



JAMES SHERMAN

DO YOU REALLY THINK WE CAN FIND A PILOT WHO'LL TAKE US TO ALDERAAN-- IN THIS CANTINA?
MOST OF THE GOOD FREIGHTER PILOTS FREQUENT HERE-- BUT WATCH YOUR STEP.
THIS PLACE CAN BE A LITTLE ROUGH.
© 1981 Marvel Comics Group
"...THE LUCAS PEOPLE REALLY LOVE COMICS. GEORGE LOVES COMICS."

still be here, having taken one break for lunch. And I really thought...

SIMONSON: Maybe. Maybe a break for lunch.

MILLER: Except for Sherman. He didn't break for lunch. (Laughter). Luckily there come a later week when everybody's deadlines eased up, and people started vanishing again. I mean except for Sherman. (More laughter.) But it was spooky at first.

FEATURE: What types of work do you each do now? Is it mainly comics, advertising...?

CHAYKIN: You want to do it round robin?

FEATURE: Sure, that'd be fine.

CHAYKIN: We'll start with you (to Simonson), because you're the oldest.

SIMONSON: I do comics. The end. (Laughter) I'm being succinct today. But actually, it's true, because I've been writing as well as drawing ***BATTLESTAR: GALACTICA*** and that took up all of my time. That's over; the stuff I've got lined up is all comics-related work. I've found I don't really enjoy advertising very much. It pays very well, but one of the reasons it pays well is it puts you through a lot of grief. And I have much too sensitive a nature to be able to deal with that kind of grief. (Laughter from elsewhere.) And I want that laugh deleted. (More laughter.) So I mostly do comics. The work I've got coming up—some stuff for ***HEAVY METAL,*** some stuff for the Marvel Special Projects...I've got a project I'm going to be doing called ***THE STAR-SLAMMERS.*** It's a space opera.

FEATURE: Is that based on your master's thesis?

SIMONSON: Well, actually, it was my senior thesis in art school. It's the same idea taken farther; presumably ten years later I'm better at doing that kind of stuff than I was then. (To Chaykin) Fortunately, they can't see that on the tape, so you don't have to die today.

What I'm going to be doing will ***probably*** be a 64-page full-color book for Marvel in the same series for which Starlin's ***"Captain Marvel Dies."*** He's also doing his ***Metamorphosis Odyssey*** sequel. (To Miller) Your ***DAREDEVIL "Angel Dust"*** story's not going to be in that batch, right? That's going to be somewhere else. That's the latest scoop. By the time this is in print, it'll have changed again.

Also I'll be taking up ***STAR WARS*** as the layout artist for David Michelinie to write. I have one commercial job, which may or may not be coming up, which would be for a commercial outfit, at commercial rates. So most of the stuff I do is comics, comics-oriented stuff.

FEATURE: What kind of trouble is it that advertising gives you?

SIMONSON: Oh, I just don't like it; don't like the people I've had to deal with. It has a lot in common with movie properties done as licensed comic books. For example, one of the specific ills is that frequently in that kind of work, you deal with editing by committee. No one person ***seems*** to have final say. The stuff gets passed to some nebulous part of the world like California, from hand to hand to hand, and suddenly some guy over there decides that since no one consulted him originally, and he's got the clout, he's really unhappy because this is not what he wanted, and the orders come back, "Ahhh! Sorry, you've got to change all these heads. Put a smile on this face, and put a frown on that one." I mean, as picayune as that.

CHAYKIN: It's minor functionaries feeling they have to earn their living.

FEATURE: Is this even true in the regular ***GALACTICA*** and ***STAR WARS*** books?

SIMONSON: To a lesser degree. ***STAR WARS*** I don't know; I've never done the ***STAR WARS*** comic other than—Howie's nodding his head, saying, "No."

CHAYKIN: Mainly because the Lucas people really love comics. George loves comics.

SIMONSON: One of the things about doing comics for people outside the field is they don't know what comics are capable of doing and what they're not capable of doing. The result is that they begin to ask for things, or make demands that are really impossible.

At one point—I'll see if I can do this anonymously. If we can, we'll use it, and if we can't, we won't—but at one point, someone in connection with a movie project, someone who was not the artist or the writer of the book, was shown stills from the movie by people involved with the movie, told to memorize them, and go back and describe them to the artist so that the artist could draw them.

CHAYKIN: This is not a joke.

SIMONSON: At one point in the making of the ***CLOSE ENCOUNTERS*** book for Marvel, Archie and I were shown stills, short film clips, and slides of the flick. They didn't give us any of these things to take back for reference, but I was permitted by the PR people for Columbia Pictures to make some loose sketches in the office of very very blurred shots of the mother ship. That's ***all*** that we were shown in advance. I made those sketches in five minutes. I mean, not even the Russian cryptographer would have been able to decipher them. The next day, all Hell broke loose. Apparently someone further up the line found out what happened, and they actually sent someone to my house to collect the sketches and take them back.

CHAYKIN: On the other hand, when I was doing the ***STAR WARS*** comic book, Charlie Lippincott, who is the liaison, gave me nearly a thousand stills.

SIMONSON: And in dealing with ***ALIEN,*** Lippincott again was the liaison guy with 20th Century. We had more cooperation with that book than I could possibly describe. We had a lot of lucky breaks: a phenomenal amount of cooperation, and it's one reason the book came out as well as I think it did. ***Everything*** went right on that book. It was a jewel to work on because we had cooperation.

CHAYKIN: You want to continue around the board? Introduce yourself. (To Sherman).

SHERMAN: Uhhhh—

SIMONSON: Comics is Hell.

SHERMAN: Comics is a lot of fun. Great format, wish I could work in it full time. But having two kids and an ex-spouse, a girl friend, bills to keep up with, and various personal things going on socially now, I have to make a bigger living than comics can afford. So I keep my thumbs in here and there. I'd say comics makes up like about 10% of my income now. The rest of it's done by movies and advertising. I do a lot of TV commercials from just polishing up some art director's work to actually designing entire campaigns from concept on.

FEATURE: When you say movies, do you mean posters?

SHERMAN: Movie posters, pre-production stuff, production paintings—mostly all the stuff that they do before they start filming.

FEATURE: Such as what?

SHERMAN: Well, I'll do key scene visuals to go along with scripts and treatments to sell investors on the concepts so that they're willing to put up money.

FEATURE: Could you name some titles of the films you're working on?

SHERMAN: I can't give you titles of films; I'm under contract not to divulge any information. Because I've only been doing this for the past year, and films usually take three to five years as a rule, to produce, to film, and to get it set up. Since ***CLOSE ENCOUNTERS***, everybody's been very secretive about stuff, and I had to sign—in fact, the last job I did production paintings for, I was under lock and key. I was supposed to lock the door whenever I worked on

One of Chaykin's record jackets for A&M.

them, and not let anybody see them. There was one day the client came in, I had my kids with me,and the client got all upset that my kids were there.

CHAYKIN: You know that they can all reproduce drawings.

SHERMAN: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. (Laughter)

[Sherman's children are five and seven years old.]

SIMONSON: All ready to go out there and make superbly-rendered drawings.

CHAYKIN: Company finks. Really.

SIMONSON: There you go. Also, some of the stuff, the kind of stuff you'd see in ***THE ART OF STAR WARS*** book that came out, or ***THE BOOK OF ALIEN,*** where you see the pre-production paintings or drawings or storyboards.

SHERMAN: Yeah, that's basically...

FEATURE: The sort of thing that Ralph McQuarrie did for ***STAR WARS.***

SHERMAN: Yeah, Ralph McQuarrie, Joe Johnson. But that's the kind of stuff that gives me a good-paying percentage of my income. Comics, I'd love to do, but I can't. I practically went broke, in fact I owed $5,000 in unpaid bills trying to do just comics. I am very slow on comics; I try to do a lot of intense lighting, reflections and all kinds of stuff, but—I envy those guys who can turn out a book in a week or two.

SIMONSON: We've broken what is known as the Kirby Barrier. (Laughter) We are permitted to do this by law. Be very alert to the kind of stuff Jim puts into a comics page, hahahahahahah.

(General laughter.)

SIMONSON: Over there on the wall is a photostat of a page from a ***LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES*** with a tenderly romantic scene with Saturn Girl and...

SHERMAN: Saturn Girl and Lightning Lad.

CHAYKIN: (Intoning) Mongo-Man! (General laughter.)

SHERMAN: Whoever it was, the hero of the week.

SIMONSON: Whoever it was, it's a full-page panel, individual panel, quite, quite beautiful, and a damn sight more work than I would ever put into any comic page I would ever produce.

SHERMAN: Took me three days.

SIMONSON: For a single page.

SHERMAN: By that time he would have turned out a book.

FEATURE: Okay, let's keep going around the table.

MILLER: I do comics. I don't do much of anything else.

CHAYKIN: I had a really rough Summer. I'm finishing up my final commitment to Marvel, and with luck it will be my last job for them for quite some time. I have nothing against Marvel personally, it's just that I find myself emotionally unable to keep myself interested in mainstream comics. I do a lot of trade paperbacks; I'm working on a book for Transcontinuity. I'm doing a book of Cody Starbuck, the character I created for Friedrich some years ago, completely redesigned in full color. I just designed forty characters for the

bridging sequence in the ***HEAVY METAL*** film, and—what else have I done recently? In advertising I'm not doing anything in terms of comps or Animatics.

MILLER: That's more or less my attitude. I didn't mention the advertising before, because Walt got into it so thoroughly, but my dealings with advertising have convinced me that I thrive on a much more regular kind of commitment.

CHAYKIN: I just did a couple of jobs for A&M Records, which use the skills that I'm using on the trade paperback comics for their advertising purposes. It wasn't me being someone else, me being an Animatics-type artist or anything like that. It was just [me] doing what I feel I do well. It made me very happy. I'd love to get into more of that, but I've got some heavy commitments elsewhere. I'm also working right now on a presentation for a children's book on basic math using science fiction.

MILLER: But I thing the thing that just draws us, all of us, into comics is a challenge that's almost unique in terms of using pictures and words, used to progress a story. And so most of the stuff that's done that doesn't seem to relate to comics does, because we're doing the narrative in other ways.

FEATURE: Well, when people from comics approach you for work, whether it's book covers or records or movies or advertising, do they come to you—do they come to you first of all specifically because they know you're involved with comics? And what do they expect from you?

SHERMAN: It depends. Some of them do, some of them don't. Some of them, if they know I'm in comics, will not hire—or talk to me—again. Other people seek me out just because of my involvement with comics.

CHAYKIN: Precisely.

FEATURE: What's the difference between the two kinds of people? Are some people looking for a different sort of thing than the others?

SIMONSON: Let me just slip one thing in here. This is something from Howard. Some years ago, he was on the phone to an art director, but when he told her that he did comics, her response was (in snide voice), "Oh, you mean like Casper, the Friendly Ghost?" (To Chaykin) Remember that?

CHAYKIN: Yeah, I do.

SIMONSON: At which point you hung up on her. (Laughter) It's an extreme example, but it demonstrates what the thinking of a lot of people is about artists who are involved with comic books, all right—"Like Casper the Friendly Ghost!"

CHAYKIN: One of the things you get into when you get involved in the business, either as a fan or a pro, or whatever, is that you tend to become very insulated [from] the fact that there's a lot more in print than just comics. And for the most part when you see comics material appearing in mainstream magazines, very often what you're seeing is an art director sort of engineering his own misplaced memories of what comics were when he was a kid. And they get very upset when an artist either transcends that sort of remembered mediocrity of his youth or confuses the art director. A good example is the ***[NATIONAL] LAMPOON.*** When the ***LAMPOON*** first got started, they ran a lot of comics. And admittedly they went to Neal [Adams], and they went to Gray [Morrow], but they also sought out a lot of really fairly mediocre guys, ***because*** the art-director remembered comics as looking bad. And, Christ, a good Alex Toth comic book just isn't funny, within the context of the appliance of comics! It's good comics!

SIMONSON: Okay. Next?

FEATURE: How disturbed are you all that comics are not held in this high esteem by most of the populace?

MILLER: I think most of the populace is generally right. Comics by and large are not heavy-duty material. My attitude toward them has changed quite a bit in the past year. I believe they can be very very good. I believe they can have good stories and good drawing. But pulp comics should be fun more than overly meaningful. The form may begin to embrace something beyond that, but what they basically are is stuff that's printed very poorly, and in order to get the best results, you have to draw rather primitively.

CHAYKIN: Emblematically.

MILLER: Emblematically, yeah.

SIMONSON: As for me, mainstream comics—comics are throwaway art. And I mean "art" to embrace stories, words and pictures, not just the drawing itself. They're meant to be read and pitched out. It's no more pretentious than that. I don't think it should be. Which isn't to say the **form** can't carry heavier weight than that.

MILLER: And I mean what we're talking about is you can really love the stuff, but it shouldn't be regarded as something it isn't. That is, you can get across a lot, but put it in the right terms first. And you're dealing with a very young audience, generally, and you're dealing with the printing. I sort of like them that way.

CHAYKIN: Again, this gets back to what we were talking about last week. The best comics are genre fiction. I personally find superheroes unreadable. I don't read them anymore. I can't. It's not just part of my grown-up life. I loved them when I was a kid, but...

MILLER: You're not twelve anymore.

CHAYKIN: Right. The best comics are as entertaining as a good western novel, a good science fiction novel, a good detective novel, a good romance novel...

MILLER: The reason that super-heroes have come to dominate the whole field is that they were created by it. Super-heroes are probably the best use of comics. In fact, as visual symbols for abstract concepts—for instance, a man in a business suit who looks rather normal won't really symbolize Villainy, but a guy like Doctor Doom will. This simple delivery gives the form a lot of power. I like the super-heroes a whole lot.

SIMONSON: The thing about super-heroes also is that they almost never work in any other medium.

MILLER: Right. They're created for and by it. It's really a beautiful case of the medium creating a genre.

SIMONSON: That's a good point.

MILLER: People did not make up costumed super-heroes and then find the place to use them. They sat down with pens and paper and

someone stumbled across the right thing to do with comics. It's not necessarily a sign of deterioration that they have come to dominate pulp comics. They're perfect for this medium.

SHERMAN: The thing about comics is that it's a medium where fantasy and imagination have free play. Comic books just break down the doors between reality and fantasy, and give you a whole world you can believe in, and stuff that just cannot exist in any other medium.

SIMONSON: And here I think what they offer is on an emblematic level. You don't have to produce incredibly realistic or photographic renderings of people in business suits to be able to draw someone in a business suit that's perfectly acceptable in terms of comic terms. The artist is creating working symbols.

SHERMAN: Comics also have a very strong potential. Back in 17th Century Europe and in 18th Century Mexico...cartoonists had a lot of power. During the Mexican revolts, governments really clamped down. Art was made illegal in Mexico because of the strong statements they could make with the simple form of a cartoon. Having a comic book, you have a lot of room to tell a story. I worked as an editorial cartoonist for a couple of years. It was my job to take stories and imply with a one panel cartoon things that could not be said in print (for fear of getting tangled into lawsuits). In comics, as opposed to one panel cartoons, you have a lot of room to tell the story behind real events that couldn't be told in newspapers—for instance, Watergate. The problems the newspapers ran up against were [that] they had to have four or five sources willing to testify in court to back up their story and a bank of lawyers in order to get one of those stories printed in ***THE WASHINGTON POST.*** Whereas in comic books, you could deal with

"...A MAN IN A BUSINESS SUIT WON'T REALLY SYMBOLIZE VILLAINY..."
SO I DID--AND SO YOU SHALL BE REWARDED FOR THIS DEED WITH THE HIGHEST REWARD IMAGINABLE--
--BY TURNING THE DEVICE YOU BUILT--
--AGAIN
YOU SHALL BE ALLOWED TO LIVE FURTHER

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that kind of behavior without naming names. You can start teaching children behavior patterns like what to shy away from, or exemplify, which is basically what super-heroes are all about. It's good versus evil, and you get a behavior pattern to deal with. The thing that I contest about super-heroes today is that one guy's got a gimmick to overcome a villain with a gimmick. The gimmicks mean nothing to me. I can't read those without falling asleep.

CHAYKIN: For me, I just find it harder and harder as I get older to draw stuff and do stuff that I can't read myself. Which is why I'm getting into the straight paperback stuff. I'm not one of those people who ever thought that adult comics had to be dirty. It just never struck me that way.

FEATURE: It's always been a sort of code word.

CHAYKIN: But that's how it is in this country. We went to this convention in Italy in February, and we got on a bus to go from Florence to Prato, the town where they were holding the convention. This bus was loaded with your normal Italian people—and a good third of the bus was reading comics! There were American super-hero comics! There were American super-hero comics in Italian, there were adult hardcovers, some erotic stuff, some adventure stuff. They just love comics! Where, on the other hand, all the illustration we saw, except for that done by comics artists, looked like bad imitations of Robert McGinnis, the guy who does all the ***"James Bond"*** posters. While one of the leading citizens of Prato owns a portrait of ***"Corto Maltese"*** by Hugo Pratt. Pratt is considered a national treasure in Italy. Do we think that way about Milton Caniff? Does anybody on the street remember the name of the guy who created Dick Tracy?

SIMONSON: Dick who?

CHAYKIN: There you go.

FEATURE: Since you all seem to agree on the point that the form is capable of producing more than regular super-hero stuff, what do you think is the—

SHERMAN: I'd like to say just one more thing about the potential of comics. In the various mediums that I've worked in, especially advertising and movies, you have about 50 people that it's got to go through before the final form is aired and seen by an audience. Whereas in comics, especially with Frank and Howie and Walt, these guys are writing and drawing their stuff. They have almost total control over what is seen by the public.

CHAYKIN: It's called megalomania.

MILLER: I mean you can really go crazy.

SHERMAN: If you're got the right editor, that artist is putting himself on the paper.

MILLER: That's precisely the case. You have a wonderful autonomy when your editor and you agree basically where you want your book to go. It's just wonderful to work that way, and it's a situation that I can't see finding anywhere else.

CHAYKIN: Where you can really be successful and still be uncooperative.

MILLER: Sure! Yeah! (Laughter.)

FEATURE: Well, so I guess you prefer—naturally you prefer working with your own stuff, but what's it like working with a writer? Frank?

MILLER: It's like having bees in your head. (Laughter) It depends on the writer. It really does. I did a ***SPIDER-MAN ANNUAL*** with Denny O'Neil that was the essence of a good collaboration. He and I hashed out the general outline of the plot over two lunches and I started drawing. Every time I came up to a point where I wasn't sure what was going to happen, I'd call him up, and we'd argue about it. The result was something that had a lot of life in it. It was very spontaneous. But if you're working with a writer you're at odds with, the product is very bad, and so is the experience.

SHERMAN: Even with a writer and an artist team, there can be a good relationship and still get that creativity. It depends. There are some writers who have the authority to say whatever they want where the artist—the artist becomes the writer's hand. If the artist doesn't put his own input into it, it's going to be a bad relationship. The same thing works both ways. It should be a "team in concert."

MILLER: There are some artists in the business who simply want to draw.

CHAYKIN: Yeah, I think so.

SIMONSON: Okay, next!

FEATURE: Well, since all three of you are writer/artists...

SIMONSON: It's okay, you can leave the room, Jim. (Laughter)

FEATURE: When you're doing things here, do you affect each other in terms of stories?

SIMONSON: I expect that Frank hasn't been [around here] long enough to be affected as far as the stories themselves go. I found Howard to be real useful as a sounding board. He's faster than I am—I'm very deliberate plotting things out. I'm not real good at instant thinking, coming up with ideas. I've got to let stuff kind of settle and ooze around before I come up with it. Howard is somebody who's just like a firecracker: the stuff just comes out left and right. So the direction of the story in the last several ***GALACTICA***s had quite a bit to do with stuff I'd discussed with Howard. He was a major, but uncredited, contributor.

CHAYKIN: You son of a bitch! (Laughter) I ***love*** seeing my name in print.

SIMONSON: Oh, I'm terribly sorry. How about in the last issue? Ulp! Too late! But it was material that really had a *lot* to do with the development of the story. In some cases, certain scenes—we even worked out certain scenes. Some of that stuff didn't make it into print, some of it did. But Howard was very helpful while I was putting that stuff together.

CHAYKIN: Even though I'm a big crank, one of the reasons that writers like to work with me is that I do a lot of their job. I'm a good plotter. I can say this with no fear of contradiction. I'll be making it up as I'm going along, but I'm pretty good at that. Also, I'm able to draw seriously completely silly ideas. A couple of years ago, I did a ***"Human Target"*** fill-in for Len called ***"Footballs of Fear"*** (Laughter), one of the ***silliest***—I mean, Len could not believe it when the artwork came in. But he remembered the plot, and he knew it was the right story. It was a riot—and I did it completely straight. I mean that's what the ***"Dominic Fortune"*** stuff is. I say, "Hey, why not do something really moronic on page 5 and then see what happens?" I'm real good at that. It comes out of—(Long pause)—drugs. (General laughter).

MILLER: That's why I'm not as fast as you guys.

SIMONSON: Okay, next!

FEATURE: Were there any problems that you ran into making the transition from being an artist to a writer/artist?

MILLER: Oh, yeah. Mostly I've been flying by the seat of my pants. But yeah. Any craft takes lots of practice, unless you're one of those people who just picks it up.

SIMONSON: Thank you. (Laughter)

CHAYKIN: One of the things about comics is, you're dealing with a fairly limited language. Both visually and literally. And it's neat to have that kind of limitation, because you're doing a book, you know what your audience is supposed to be, and you play to that audience.

SIMONSON: When you have a problem you have to solve, whether it's a problem of art, or of writing, or whatever, the parameters of the problem usually provide a starting place that suggests solutions. Let's stretch these parameters, or fight against them, or whatever. Whereas if you are given an assignment which is completely open-ended so you can go anywhere with it, I always found it to be much, much more difficult to wrestle with, because I didn't know where the Hell to begin. And in a comic book, there are so many strictures that it really gives you a lot of places to start working.

MILLER: Recently I worked out a new way to present a sequence, because of the parameters in which I had to work. It was a sequence-sequence of underworld types interrogating each other. And I realized, if it was convincing, the scenes would be utterly unprintable by Marvel's standards. Three pages of people being beaten up—I mean ***really*** beaten up—would be a little much for them. And what it ended up being was almost like a text scene. One panel runs the height of a page, with a series of captions telling the story, and the image at the bottom of the panel is the final image in the sequence.

[Note: This sequence appeared in DAREDEVIL #170]

FEATURE: Since you all seem to agree that the form of the medium is potentially—has greater potential than what's usually turned out in mainstream comics, are there any particular examples you look up to, as transcending what usually comes out? And do you have any ideal projects of your own that you'd like to do someday to test the limits of the medium?

CHAYKIN: I think there's a problem in your question.

SHERMAN: It's a three-part question.

CHAYKIN: Well, it sounds like a qualitative judgment. And that's dangerous. I don't think comics have all that much phenomenal potential for...for whatever a potential is for.

I think comics have reached their potential and I think right now now we're on a mesa. And that's fine. I mean right now we're playing with technical ideas. I mean is Corben a better comic book artist than Moebius because Corben works in paint?

SIMONSON: Also, another question you're examining is pulp comics, because it seems to me a phenomenal peak in pulp comics and super-hero comics was reached 15 years ago, a ***phenomenal*** peak of super-hero comics. Where can you go from there?

MILLER: I disagree thoroughly with what both of you said.

SIMONSON: What did we say?

MILLER: You actually said two different things. Eisner's paperback, ***A CONTRACT WITH GOD:*** I thought that had a couple of elements in it that I hadn't seen in comics. The story about ***"The Super"*** achieved something I wouldn't have thought possible.

CHAYKIN: Morally?

MILLER: The character portrait involved, and the way that he arrived at it without using the standard devices. That book was a very good example of something new that comics can do. There was some violence in the stories but it wasn't comic book violence.

SHERMAN: It wasn't gratuitous violence.

MILLER: Well, it isn't always gratuitous in comics, either, but it's usually comic book violence.

SIMONSON: Well, like ***"Roadrunner"*** cartoons. Of course, there the violence is almost the ***raison d'etre*** of the whole...

CHAYKIN: Hey!

SIMONSON: Ta da da daaaa! I'm going to use that phrase all the time. (Laughter) For the cartoon...

CHAYKIN: He's a writer now.

SIMONSON: I have to demonstrate that left and right. I thought I'd speak to what Howard did much earlier. I don't know what the potential for comics is. What I said before was just that I thought there was a very high peak in that stuff in the mid-'60s, and I don't know that I have seen anything to match that by anybody since that time—certainly not on that kind of sustained level.

MILLER: Let's talk about some individual examples.

SIMONSON: I'm talking about...

CHAYKIN: THE FANTASTIC FOUR.

SIMONSON: The Lee and Kirby stuff.

MILLER: I think that some of the stuff that Starlin got into was really thrilling to watch as it came out. It was the kind of really charged-up stuff that only a guy really at home with comics could produce.

SIMONSON: Sure, but how many comics did Jim do?

MILLER: Not a lot.

SIMONSON: That's what I'm talking about.

SHERMAN: Ten issues of some titles.

MILLER: Yeah, he did a number of comics, but it wasn't...

SIMONSON: Probably twenty of a single title.

CHAYKIN: We're talking about over a hundred issues.

SIMONSON: Yeah. There's like a factor of ten!

CHAYKIN: Kirby!!

MILLER: The point I wanted to make about the combination is that it used to—well, you know: "Ditko really did it," "Kirby really did it," but the fact is that it was entirely the combination of talents that made it happen. None of them have matched that stuff since.

FEATURE: Do you have projects that you'd like to do one day? Is there something to which in the future you'd say, "Given 150 million dollars, and not having to worry at all about whether [you] can sell it or what sort of audience it has..." What would those projects be like?

SHERMAN: That's basically why we got into the business, to do that.

SIMONSON: I don't believe a word of that.

CHAYKIN: He got it out already.

SIMONSON: I don't believe he can do a series without restrictions and get anything done. I know I couldn't. I used to believe that.

MILLER: I'm presently involved with work that I'm learning a lot from, and that I'm challenged by. And so it's really hard to think beyond that. I will, when I get boring.

SIMONSON: I've got some projects to do that have been around for a long time. They've been gestating over ten years ever since I went through the degree stuff, but the idea of a luxurious retirement in which I would create my dream project without pressure just doesn't seem viable to me anymore.

SHERMAN: Like the ***WHAT IF?*** comics.

SIMONSON: Yes. Exactly like ***WHAT IF?*** comics.

MILLER: ***"What if Walt had Forever and a Million Dollars to do What He Wanted?"***

SIMONSON: I ***need*** like the goad to get anything finished. I'm talking real life now.

CHAYKIN: In real life you can create that atmosphere. I'm worried about the response that some of our more pretentious fan critics are going to have to our answers to some of these questions, because they're going to say that, "All our answers are reasonably banal." (Laughter.) "[They're] not motivated by any higher interest." Frankly, I'm not motivated by any higher interest.

SIMONSON: Don't you want to create fine art?

MILLER: The best achievements of any form are those created for it, which does relate to what I said earlier about super-heroes. Now there's some real powerful writing. Chandler, and Hammett. And when I think, "God, I'd like to adapt that," what I'd really like to do is use what it did to me in a story I made.

SIMONSON: To create that sort of feeling anew, as it were, in the form of comics. Not by doing a by-rote comic-book adaptation of that same book...

MILLER: Doing something different in the language of the form.

SHERMAN: I think that goes to the heart of why most of us were inspired to go into comics to begin with. Most of us were told by others who were our mentors what a rape job this business is like, but despite that we go off and decide to become a comic artist anyway. In spite of the huge amounts of work with little pay-off...

While you're ***drawing***, you're making some sort of money—the money's really got nothing to do with it. It's just that it's a medium where you get to express yourself with relatively total control over the final product and in a small way affect the collection of mass culture personally.

MILLER: The money does have something to do with it.

SHERMAN: Minor, but yeah.

MILLER: My approach to drawing a page has changed a great deal in three years. I've learned to work faster.

CHAYKIN: That's what differentiates the guys in your generation from the guys that were around when I came in, because we were willing to do it for nothing. We were really stupid!

A sample of James Sherman's newspaper cartooning work from *THE FAIR PRESS.*

MILLER: You have to draw in a different manner. You have to be able to sum things up in fewer lines. And I like what it does to drawing. I like comics as raw—you know, as rough, almost, in their look.

CHAYKIN: I remember taking two months to pencil a 23½ page comic book.

MILLER: I once took three weeks to pencil three pages. (Laughter.)

SIMONSON: Two months per episode of ***"Manhunter."*** That was eight pages, as I remember.

MILLER: And it took me four months to do a bimonthly ***DAREDEVIL*** for the first few issues.

SHERMAN: Gee, how did you guys live?

SIMONSON: (to Sherman) These are the old stories.

CHAYKIN: Wheras the ***"Dominic Fortune"*** strip now goes from pencil to color in seven days.

SHERMAN: —and five minutes.

CHAYKIN: And five minutes to get a cab. (Laughter.)

SHERMAN: I slowed down because I wanted to be better at it. I thought the stuff I turned out during that time was shit. Fans at conventions say it was my best stuff.

MILLER: The only comic I've ever produced under an idiotic schedule was an issue of ***DAREDEVIL*** needed to replace the drug story. I found out that there needed to be a new issue, and the previous issue had been on the stands for two weeks. I pencilled the first seven pages and roughed out the last ten in four days. Killed myself doing it, and Klaus inked it in no time at all, and I looked over the issue when it came out and liked some of what had happened. It was rough, it was hurried, but the figures ***moved.*** I think that part of the reason that guys like Kirby are so good at comics is that they're so damn fast at it. And their figures just fly around.

SHERMAN: I think that's true. The harder you—the faster you draw, the more action gets into the drawing.

CHAYKIN: A couple of days ago, I went home did those 15 pages of layouts in an hour and a half (Snapping his fingers while speaking). Bup, bup, bup—because it really went down. And I looked at it later, wanting to find something wrong with it, and it still looked good.

SHERMAN: Sure. What we were talking about the other day, motivational theatre; key yourself up...

CHAYKIN: That's right.

MILLER: When you're talking your imaginary circumstances, of having total freedom to produce the perfect comic book, I don't think most people would produce anything as good as what they would produce for Marvel or DC. I think it would tend to get pretty constipated.

CHAYKIN: Boy, was that a broad statement.

MILLER: Yeah.

CHAYKIN: Talk about overcommitting yourself.

FEATURE: Okay, how would you describe the differences between Upstart and the other comics artists' studios?

SIMONSON: Oh, easy. The ones in the past belong to the Golden Age of Studios, and we belong to the Silver Age. (Laughter.)

CHAYKIN: Jesus.

SIMONSON: I'd like you guys to try and top that, if you can.

SHERMAN: No real difference other than the fact that we're the best.

CHAYKIN: (To Sherman) Thank you. (to ***FEATURE***) By other studios, which do you mean?

FEATURE: Well, partly Continuity, since a lot of you worked there.

CHAYKIN: The difference is that we're not a company, ***per se;*** we are four independents. We use a shelter name and we work in the same place. We have reasonably similar interests, and...

MILLER: Yeah, this is a free association.

SIMONSON: It's different in purpose.

SHERMAN: It's more like renting a house. We're just renting space.

CHAYKIN: Right! There's a big difference. Think of us as a frat. (Laughter.)

SIMONSON: But being really generative, for work.

[The Studio] were a bunch of guys together, and we're a bunch of guys together. It's perfectly natural that we'd be thought of together.

MILLER: Actually, I've come to refer to this place as an office, without ever intending to.

CHAYKIN: Same here.

MILLER: Because that's really the tone. When I come in here in the morning, I wave briefly to the others and then I sit down and work.

CHAYKIN: And there usually isn't too much talk until everybody's been in for about an hour.

SHERMAN: I've been here for almost two months, and we've had a total of four conversations.

MILLER: Yeah.

CHAYKIN: It's a very hard-working group.

MILLER: I shut a mental door behind me when I walk into my area.

SHERMAN: It's very conducive to getting caught up in your own fantasies.

CHAYKIN: You rarely come in here and see a model standing draped on a pedestal...

SHERMAN: And if there is one, nobody pays attention to her anyway.

CHAYKIN: Right. We rarely wear our smocks or our berets, and we don't operate under—actually, the "office" part, I think, says it the best. It's a place to work.

MILLER: And at noon we gather around the water cooler.

CHAYKIN: And there are some really ugly women working on the floor...(Laughter.)

SHERMAN: I don't know. That sixty-year-old lady across the way is not bad...

FEATURE: And we had one other question about assistants. Do you guys have them?

CHAYKIN: Yes.

SHERMAN: Yes.

FEATURE: And do they work up here? Do they come in to the studio or do you farm it out to them?

CHAYKIN: I have an assistant who's been with me now—it'll be two years this [recently past] January. His name is Peter Kuper. K-U-P-E-R. And he is a student at Pratt. I've known Peter for ten years; he used to be a fan, and a really obnoxious one at that, and he turned into a really nice grown-up. He does a lot of work for me. He assisted me on the second volume of ***THE STARS MY DESTINATION, THE SWORDS OF HEAVEN...*** He's getting a credit on the ***"Dominic Fortune"*** strip, and he's working with me on the ***STARBUCK*** strip. Peter works here.

SHERMAN: I use several assistants. They work here when I use them. I have not farmed anything out, yet. I found that to be a disadvantage. (Chaykin groans.) It's like trying to do two jobs at once. I find I do need to keep my nose in what their business is, because it's my business first of all. Whatever I have them do reflects on my career, and the crazy thing is about this business—it happened one day while I was here—was you can work for fourteen years, and one day something will fuck up and blow-your whole career, you might as well be driving a garbage truck.

CHAYKIN: I've been working with an assistant since I did ***EMPIRE***, and I allowed myself to be convinced that I needed one because I was going totally berserk. And I'm working in a medium where there are a lot of steps in the job where the responsibility to do a job can in part be delegated to someone else. It's made my life a whole lot more comfortable, and it's made Peter's life very comfortable, too. I'm a lot happier for it.

SIMONSON: The only thing I can add is that in the course of the ***ALIEN*** book, I actually did use three assistants with the coloring. The majority of the coloring in that book was done by three women who worked for me. I acted as art director for a major portion of that book. And our of 61 pages, maybe a little under 50 were colored by those three women. They did a real nice job. It was strictly a matter of being able to produce. We had to produce 61 pages of finished work, including the writing and lettering, in about 90 days. And it was...

CHAYKIN: Oh, pshaw.

SIMONSON: Hey, it was nothing.

SHERMAN: I prefer to turn the whole job over to the assistant. Do my own stuff, then let him/her take over. Doesn't pay as much, but it's worth it. Keeps 'em off the streets.●

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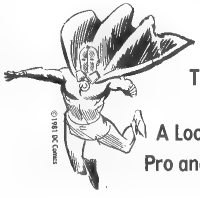
NEXT ISSUE:

ROY THOMAS: LOOKING AHEAD AT DC

Comics' premiere Silver Age scripter discusses his new projects and his views of the industry in general



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The Super-Team Spirit moves us to The Justice Society of America

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A Look at Marvel's "New" KA-ZAR series

Pro and Con ***by Chuck Huber and Carol Kalish***

The Lost Comics Companies covers DC promotional licensee TIM PUBLICATIONS

ANIMATED CHATTER on "Why Nobody Wants to be an ***ARISTOCAT***"

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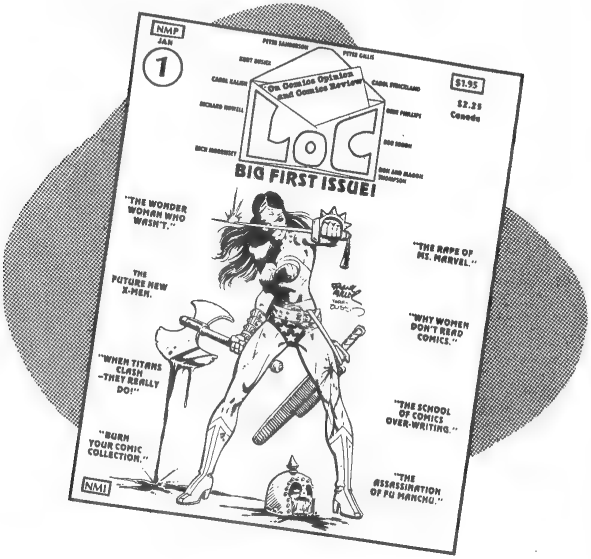

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THE MARVEL AGE OF COMICS

by Don and Maggie Thompson

[Note: We've collected comics since before there *was* a comics "fandom." While the Earth's crust was cooling, we were packing away issues of ***CLASSICS ILLUSTRATED*** and ***MAD*** and ***OUR GANG***. But we're only two of many people who were rummaging through second-hand comics bins and we're only two of many people who came out of the woodwork and joined together in an anarchic "comic-dom" in the early 1960s. Other comics fans will have had different experiences of those high and far-off times, and we'd enjoy hearing from them and including their counterpoint to what has, so far, been a duet. Write to: ***Don and Maggie Thompson, 8786 Hendricks Road, Mentor, Ohio 44060.***]

Last time, we covered the first comic art fan awards—called the Alley Awards. DC took its place as the pre-eminent favorite of early comics fans, and their favorite favorite was ***"Flash of Two Worlds"*** from ***FLASH #123***, a story which reintroduced the Golden Age Flash and retold the origins of both. Comics fans are still pretty much suckers for visitors from the Golden Age, notwithstanding the almost-invariable failure of regularly published comics devoted to them. As visitors, the old-timers are welcomed as novel and fascinating. It's when the guests settle in and start to talk about what's happened to them recently and spin yarns of current derring-do that they become unwelcome bores. But back to 1962.

1962 saw the growth of affection in comics fandom for a new type of super-hero comic; it really was a new type, and the fan awards of 1962 showed it. (You've begun to think we're going to tie development of this column to the fan awards. You're absolutely correct. How better can we trace fandom's history than through its affections and foibles as revealed via its favorites? We will ramble a bit far afield from them now and then, but they'll lend a skeleton to this work which we can flesh out as we go. Had enough metaphors yet?)

Jerry Bails tallied the second Alley Awards, which now had twenty categories and thirty-one fans making up the nominating ballot from which fandom chose its favorites. (Results appeared in ***ALTER EGO #6***, Winter 1963-4.)

That was the professional division, the second that encompassed all comics which had been published in 1962. (Actually, if you compare the first and second annual awards, you'll note that some categories were added or changed. Instead of one "story" category, there were two. "Best Adventure Hero/ine Not Having Own Comic Book" was dropped.

THE ALLEY AWARDS FOR COMICS: 1962

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1. Best Comic Book of the Year: ***FANTASTIC FOUR***
2. Best Editor of a Comics Group: Julius Schwartz
3. Best Script Writer: Gardner Fox
4. Best Pencil Artist: Carmine Infantino
5. Best Inker: Murphy Anderson
6. Best Hero: Hawkman
7. Best Group of Heroes: Fantastic Four
8. Best Villain: Sub-Mariner
9. Best Supporting Character: The Thing
10. Best Short Story: ***"Origin of Spider-Man"*** (***AMAZING FANTASY #15***)
11. Best Book-Length Story: ***"The Planet That Came to a Standstill"*** (***MYSTERY IN SPACE #75***) (this was a JLA/Adam Strange crossover; crossovers were still very rare in those days and fans loved them.)
12. Best Single Comic Book Cover: ***BRAVE & BOLD #42*** (Hawkman)
13. Comic Book Most in Need of Improvement: ***BATMAN***
14. Hero/ine Most Worthy of Revival: The Spectre

Fandom Zone

"Best Single Issue of a Comic Book" was also dropped. One "artist" category was changed to two, to allow for differences between pencilling and inking. This was questioned by some fans, who pointed out that few voters were qualified to judge the matter in comics where the division was uncredited. But it was retained for years. Editor, writer, and villain came in for attention. And, already, "Worst Comic" was altered to that "Most in Need of Improvement"; it was always an embarrassment to people conducting the poll, though it allowed the fans to let off steam. As some noted at the time, there were a lot of worse comics around that didn't get noticed because they were so awful that no one bought them. On the other hand, some fans were upset because they felt compelled to support super-hero comics and so bought ***BATMAN*** despite the depths to which it had fallen in those days.)

In addition to the "pro" section, in the second awards, there was an "ama" division, listing the favorite fan efforts. It was done with weighted voting on a scale of 5. Winners were listed as follows:

15. Comic Fanzines of 1961 and 1962: ***ALTER-EGO #1-4*** (Jerry Bails & Roy Thomas) 4.79

15. Special Projects : ***INDEX TO ALL-STAR COMICS*** (Jerry Bails) 4.47

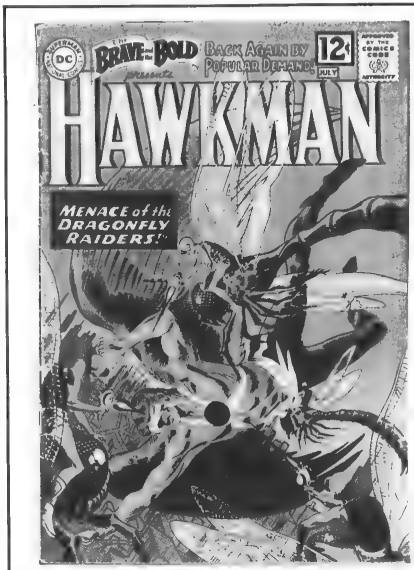
17. Articles: "***The Light of the Green Lantern***" (Jerry Bails) 4.47

18. Features: "***Profiles on Collectors***" (Bill White) 4.29

19. Strips: "***Bestest League of America***" (Roy Thomas) 4.19

20. Fiction: "***The Reincarnation of The Spectre***" (Roy Thomas) 4.13

You can see that Roy Thomas was a favorite of the fans, even when he was doing fan writing. The voting covered a two-year period, since there had been no few fan awards for the previous year. It should also be noted that voting tended to concentrate on the fanzines whose readers got the ballot and on those which aimed for circulation growth. (***ALTER EGO***'s editors were trying to get it distributed to the largest possible number of fans—thus ***earning*** its reputation as a seminal point in comics fandom. We tried, as did Dick and Pat Lupoff with ***XERO***, to keep our circulation as small as possible.) With its lighthearted, friendly atmosphere and enthusiasm for its subject, ***ALTER EGO*** delighted fans looking for fun (a take-off on The Justice League) and information (articles on many super-heroes) pertaining to their hobby.



Best Single Comic Book Cover of 1962

You'll also note the increased enthusiasm for Marvel, with awards to ***FANTASTIC FOUR*** and ***SPIDER-MAN*** in the midst of the awards to DC. "The Marvel Age of Comics" had begun in earnest—though it would do even better in the next year's fan awards. For a picture of how the Marvels of this time struck readers who had primarily experienced the DC view of the costumed world, read Fred Hembeck's ***BAN HEMBECK!*** It is a brilliant picture of what happened to comics and their readers then.

What were we doing in 1962? We produced two more issues of our fanzine, ***COMIC ART***. #3 came out in April (200 copies); #4 came out in December (250 copies). It was the last year in which we were able to churn the zine out more than once a year. In fact, the next year (partly because of a financially-crippling Cleveland newspaper strike) saw only a fact sheet and a reprint of a portion of #4 from our "press." At that, the cover of #3 had a picture of Jerry Dumas drawing Sam (of Dumas' ***SAM'S STRIP***), who was saying as he was being drawn, "We know ***COMIC ART #3*** is late but we're doing the best we can!" (Actually, since ***CA*** was ***always*** published on an irregular schedule, it was ***never*** late. Just because we haven't done an issue since October 1968 is no reason to think the next one is late. Right?)

1962 was a big year for us. Whereas #3 came out when we were still Don Thompson and Maggie Curtis, #4 was edited by Don and Maggie Thompson—the first comics fan marriage. (Ah, another first, for those of you keeping track!) (Maybe that explains how we found other things to do in 1963 besides publish a fanzine.)

Fandom Zone

And 1962 was a good year for fandom in general. While ***ALTER-EGO*** announced it was to become an annual, ***THE COMICOLLECTOR*** (mostly ads) and ***ON THE DRAWING BOARD*** (comics news) came out from Jerry Bails, as did the ***ALL-STAR INDEX*** mentioned above. G. B. Love had begun ***THE ROCKET'S BLAST*** in December of the previous year and it was becoming a fixture in fandom, just as ***XERO*** was heading towards its demise (with only one more issue planned after 1962). (***XERO*** had caught on with a vengeance. Still selling at three for a dollar, it had found a hard-core of enthusiasts, mostly in SF fandom, that had turned it into one of the best fanzines ever done. Dick and Pat Lupoff had been almost overcome by their Frankenstein monster of a publication which had become something of a focal point of SF fandom, with such contributors of articles and letters as Walt Willis, Bob Leman, Robert Coulson, Lin Carter, Steve Stiles, Gary Deindorfer (with a brilliant in-group take-off on ***DONDI, "Fandi"***), Richard Kyle, Avram Davidson, Jack Chalker, Rog Ebert, Larry Ivie, Dan Adkins, Frederik Pohl, Harry Warner, Bob Briney, John Baxter, and Donald E. Westlake. (One of our favorite letters in those days, though, was from Andy Zerbe, who wrote, "I have just read ***XERO #8*** and I think it is the best fanzine I have read yet, but I'll probably change my mind when I get around to reading more fanzines.") Issue #9 ran 100 interior pages—which may indicate why the Lupoffs called it quits with #10.)

As we said, though, 1962 was a ***good*** year for fandom. One fandom emerged in that year to flourish briefly and then disappear—until several of its big names emerged again in publications like ***PLAYBOY***. That was the minifandom of satire fans. Probably its best publication was Joe Pilati's ***SMUDGE***, but there were several short-lived fanzines featuring work by such people as Jay Kinney, Jay Lynch, Skip Williamson, and Don Dohler. Edgar Rice Burroughs' fandom also took a new lease on life at about this time. And more and more amateur-created super-heroes began to appear. Fanzines featuring fan strips began to proliferate.

We did comics reviews in ***COMIC ART #3:*** "Unfortunately, ***THE HULK,*** newest from Kirby and Lee, isn't worthy of such faint praise as that [we had just given to ***THE FANTASTIC FOUR***). It stinks. A comic-book-length rendition of one of their hack monster stories with a continuing character modeled more or less on The Thing." We'll stick with that review today—at least as it pertains to ***THE HULK #1*** (which is $120-$480 in ***OVERSTREET #10***).

It is of at least mild interest today to read quotes from reviews written in Spring 1962: "***JOHN FORCE, MAGIC AGENT*** [#1 is 75¢-$2.25 in ***OVERSTREET #10***], has an undeserved reputation as the worst of the current crop of comics. It comes close, but is nosed out for the honor by ***BLACKHAWK, AQUAMAN*** [#1 is $7-$21], ***RIP HUNTER—TIME MASTER*** [#1 is $4-$12], ***CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN,*** and ***TOMAHAWK***. And it finishes leagues behind the real worst comic, ***WONDER WOMAN.***" We also commented, "the top quality comic book is now, as it has been for years, ***UNCLE SCROOGE.***"

COMIC ART was never as devoted to super-heroes as the rest of comics fandom; we featured coverage of the humorous work of Warren Tufts—and the #4 cover featured Ed Wheelan and his ***MINUTE MOVIES.*** (In addition to an article on the strip, we also had articles in that issue on Sergio Aragones, James Swinnerton, and Barbie. We were diverse.) We even reviewed a new comic strip: "***BEN CASEY***, drawn for NEA by Neal Adams, is hopelessly bad. Adams is a fair artist, but his strip has no continuity, even from panel to panel in a day's episode." A fair artist, hm? This was the first look most comics fans had at Adams' work as such. We stand by the review of Adams' work ***at the time;*** we'd now say he improved a bit later.

We felt that the FF, Thor, and Hulk's strips had improved markedly by year's end—and still think so. That either means we're intransigent stick-in-the-muds (sticks-in-the-mud?)—or that our taste was just as fine then as it is now.

The point is that the Silver Age of Comics was well under way by this time. ***BULLWINKLE*** was well under way as a marvelous prime-time animated cartoon.

And fans were starting to get a real sense of community. There had been no conventions as yet—not even a comics-fan get-together as such (aside from conversations among comics-oriented science-fiction fans at conventions and SF club meetings).

Nor would there be in 1963.

But we were all getting to know each other better.●

Next Month:

1963: THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM.

CREATION CONVENTION REPORT

JOHN BYRNE'S PLANS FOR THE FANTASTIC FOUR

THE TEEN TITANS

THE STATE OF COMICS TODAY

The tenth annual Thanksgiving Creation Convention was held over the Thanksgiving weekend last year. Among the scheduled events were a long panel discussion moderated by Marvel Comics editor-in-chief Jim Shooter, a writer's panel , a John Byrne panel, a Marv Wolfman panel, and a X-Men panel which featured input and appearances by almost all of the creative staff associated with the book.

The composite Marvel Comics panel focused on how a Marvel comic is put together. Jim Shooter led the panel's various participants through a lengthy discussion of how story sessions are run, the interactions between the editor and the creative team, and the various production proceedures that are gone through before a finished comic book can be produced.

The writers' panel consisted of Tom DeFalco and Mark Gruenwald from Marvel, Marv Wolfman from DC, and Steve Gerber, who had come to the convention for the premiere appearance of his new graphic novel ***STEHART THE RAT.*** Mark Gruenwald and Marv Wolfman were asked what they thought was the state of the comics medium. Wolfman asserted that there was "less readable material this year than there was seven years ago. The majority of books are slicker but more repetitive and not as well done." He stated further that comics are not as good nowadays "because it's all the same," and that comics have been using "the same formula for twenty years. Some of it's very good, some of it is sloppy." Wolfman wished that the comics industry would do more in genres other than the superhero adventure. He specifically cited the romance and funny animal genres as areas he would be interested in exploring.

Gerber also chose to answer the question by insisting that "The state of the medium is North Dakota, sparsely populated and too cold for comfort."

Tom De Falco, on the other hand, argued that today's comics are better than they've ever been before. Gruenwald commented that "Everyone has a fondness for stuff he read as a kid so if you read them now you think they're the best." He admitted that presently there were "not too many things I look forward to reading, but maybe that's just me."

The panel members were also asked what their favorite comics were. Wolfman chose ***SUPERMAN***, Gerber cited ***ACTION*** and ***SUPERBOY***, De Falco picked ***SPIDER-MAN***, and Gruenwald opted for ***THE JUSTICE LEAGUE***. A follow-up question concerning who the panelists' favorite artists were elicited a listing that read like a who's who of comics masters. Gruenwald cited Jack Kirby, Steve Ditko, Gene Colan, Keith Pollard, George Perez, and Ron Wilson. De Falco picked John Romita, Jr. as his personal favorite. Gerber chose Gene Colan, but also listed Kirby, Ditko, Barry Windsor-Smith, Berni Wrightson, and Sal Buscema. Wolfman admitted to admiration of all the previously named artists. He singled out Perez and Colan for special praise and added Frank Miller, Walt Simonson, Alex Toth, Will Eisner, Harvey Kurtzman, Jim Aparo, and Joe Kubert to the running list.

One of the highlights of the con was a special panel devoted exclusively to John Byrne. Much of the panel was devoted to a discussion of Byrne's plans for ***THE FANTASTIC FOUR***, which he will be both writing and drawing. His stated goal with the book is "to turn the clock back to 1963." He intends to bring back many of the elements of the strip that attracted him to the book when he was a young Marvel reader. Some of the changes Byrne intends to make in the book include trimming twenty-five pounds off all the F.F. members and the return of the F.F.'s old "baggy costumes" with the black collars. The Torch will also be drawn to look younger. Byrne said he always "wanted to be The Torch" when he was a fan, and the character remains his favorite member of the team.

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John Byrne's (and Joe Sinnott's) Fantastic Four from Byrne's earlier tenure on the *FF*s feature. When Byrne returns to the *FANTASTIC FOUR* comic with issue #232, he will not only pencil it, but also write and ink it.

The Thing will again become "a tragic hero" rather than "a big orange teddy bear," Byrne reports. He also intends to have Ben break off his long-standing relationship with Alicia Masters. Byrne intends to establish once and for all that Ben and Alicia didn't fool around during ***their*** years as an established Marvel couple—"because he'd kill her." Byrne also promised that in an upcoming story readers will at long last be introduced to Ben's oft-mentioned, but never seen, Aunt Petunia.

Byrne is planning a story entitled "The Death of Franklin Richards" which will, if he gets permission from the powers-that-be at Marvel, actually end with Franklin's demise. Furthermore if Byrne can win the approval of Stan Lee for a proposed Silver Surfer story in a future issue of ***THE FANTASTIC FOUR***, he intends to destroy the Surfer's home planet of Zenn-La.

Byrne explained why the Inhumans will be moving to the blue area of the moon. He claims that Earth's air pollution, which as long-time **FF** readers will recall, forced Crystal to return to the Hidden Refuge, has finally reached a level where it is affecting the Inhumans in the Great Refuge. In a related Inhuman story, Crystal will finally have her baby in an upcoming ***SUB-MARINER*** story

continued on page 45

Fandom Almanac

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Mt. Prospect, IL. PROSPECT HIGH SCHOOL COMIC BOOK CLUB. Meets at Prospect High School, Room 130, 801 W. Kensington Rd., every Tuesday at 3:00 p.m. Contact: R. Marr.

Nepean, Ontario, Canada. INTERNATIONAL COMIC COLLECTOR'S CLUB. Publishes a quarterly magazine and bulletin. Membership is $10/year. Contact: Ken Gorman or Mike Berthiaume, P.O. Box 11336 Postal Station H, Nepean, Ontario, Canada K2H5Z0.

Orange, CA. WEST COAST COMICS CLUB. Meets on the second Saturday of each month at 7:00 P.M. in the Community Room of The City shopping center, Orange, CA. Publishes a monthly newsletter, ***The Fourth World Press***; sponsors the annual Science Fiction and Fantasy Art Show and Competition. Dues $1.50 a month. Contact: Barry Short, 420 West Fourth Street, San Dimas, CA 91773. (714) 599-2488.

Phoenix, AZ. PHOENIX COMIC BOOK CLUB. Meets at Quality Inn West, 2420 W. Thomas, 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Contact: Ken Strack, N. 22nd St., Phoenix, AZ 85018 (602) 992-3323.

Pittsburgh, PA. PITTSBURGH COMIX CLUB. Meets at Eddie's Comix & SF Shop, 11 Federal Street, every second Saturday from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. Contact: Ben Pondexter, 827 Anaheim, Pittsburgh, PA 15210.

Rochester, NY. COMIC BOOK PEN PAL CLUB. Newsletter published. For info, contact: The Comic Book Man, 135 Glen Ellyn Way, Rochester, NY 14618.

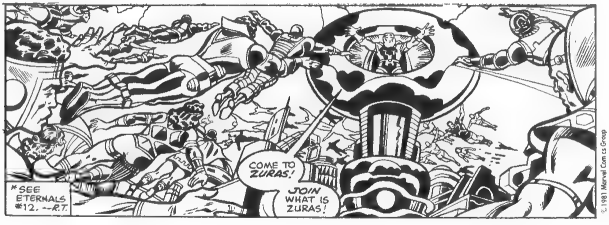
Rochester, NY. ROCHESTER FANTASY FANS. Meets weekly at Rundel Library, Winton Ave. Branch and Maplewood Branch (on rotating basis) on Wednesday at 7:00 P.M. Sponsors conventions, publishes a fanzine, and offers a 20% discount plan on comics and magazines. Contact: R.F.F., P.O. Box 1701, Rochester, NY 14603.

St. Louis, MO. SPECTOR COMICS CLUB. Meets at Century Bowl, 7508 Michigan, 1:00-4:00 p.m. Contact: Anthony Gladish, 3917 Ohio Street, St. Louis, MO 63118.

Urbana, IL. CHAMPAIGN-URBANA COMIC CLUB. Meets at the Illinois Union Building, Room 215, 712 W. Illinois, Urbana, every Thursday at 7:00 p.m. Contact: Mel DeSart.

Vancouver, B.C., Canada. VANCOUVER COMIC BOOK CLUB. Publishes the VCBC Bulletin and sponsors conventions. (V-Con). Contact: VCBC, P.O. Box 48873, Bentall Sta., Vancouver, B.C., Canada V7X1A8.

If you would like your comics club to be listed on this page, send all pertinent information to: ***COMICS FEATURE MAGAZINE***/Listings Department/c/o New Media Publications/127 Mount Auburn Street/Cambridge/MA/02138.



COMICS CONVENTIONS

March 14. COMICS, CARDS and Nostalgia. Stouffer's Somerset Inn, Cleveland, OH, at intersection of Rt. 8 and 422. Admission is $1.00. Contact: John Szuch (216) 842-2363.

March 19. SERENDIPITY. Hotel Regency at 1124 W. Baltimore Ave. Baltimore Md. Contact: Bob Horn (301) 398-6685.

March 26. SERENDIPITY IN PIKESVILLE. Quality Inn, 10 Wooded Way, Pikesville, MD.

March 28. ROCHESTER FANTASY FAIR II. Wislon Commons at the University of Rochester. Guests: Producers of 'Fear No Evil.' Free movies, War Gaming, Art Exhibit, Costume parades, Dealers Tables. Admission is Free. Contact: Rochester Fantasy Fans, P.O. Box 1701, Rochester, NY 14603.

April 2. SERENDIPITY IN NEWARK, DE. Sheraton Inn at Rt. 195 and 273, Newark, DE. Contact: Bob Horn (301) 398-6685.

April 10-12. MIAMICON. Holiday Inn at the intersection of the Hialeah Palmetto Expressway and 103rd St. Guests include Frank Miller, Pat Broderick, Fred Hembeck, and Al Kurzrok. Panels, trivia contests, costume parade, etc. Admission is $5.00 per day or $10.00 for all three. Contact: Miamicon IV (305) 940-9539.

April 10, 11, 12. PITTCON. Duquesne University, Pittsburg, Pa. at the William Penn Hotel in Pittsburg. Guests include Jim Shooter, Len Wein, Frank Miller, Howard Bender, Josef Rubinstein. Panels, Auction, Brunch with the Pros, and a video show. Admission is free.

April 11 and 12. MICROCON. Hotel Leamington in downtown Minneapolis. Guests include John Byrne, Jim Korkis, Rich Larson, and Steve Fastner. Admission is $3.00.

April 12. NOSTALGIA SHOW. Ocean Beach Park in New London, CT. Admission is $1.00 Contact Phil or Marlene Hendel (203) 442-1001.

May 14-17. SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY ART SHOW AND COMPETITION. Mall of Orange at 2200 N. Tustin Dr., Orange, Ca. Art show judging by Jack Kirby, Russ Manning, Don Rico, Mike Royer, Rick Sternbach, Bjo Trimble. Judging will take place on May 16. Contact: Eugene Henderson (714) 638-0089.

continued from page 43.

by Jim Shooter. Unfortunately the baby will be born with a super-fast metabolism, an inheritance probably from the father, Quicksilver. The babe will consequently age at a tremendously rapid rate.

Byrne has very definite ideas about how to portray the popular F.F. villain, Dr. Doom. He will be portrayed as "a proud, slightly psychotic, arrogant, noble man, second in intellect only to Reed Richards." Other returning villains will include the Red Ghost and the Mad Thinker. Doctor Octopus will battle Mr. Fantastic, and Byrne hopes to feature Magneto in a story. Alpha Flight will also eventually be appearing in ***THE FANTASTIC FOUR,*** as will The Impossible Man, accompanied by his now-pregnant girlfriend.

Byrne also was questioned about how he plans to approach the pencilling of ***PETER PARKER, THE SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN.*** Byrne intends to "do Ditko" on it.

Byrne reported that he will be doing a story for ***EPIC,*** probably in collaboration with Roger Stern. When asked what other series or projects he would like to get involved with, Byrne listed ***ROM, THE SILVER SURFER, SHE-HULK, SGT. FURY, METAMORPHO, DEADMAN,*** and ***THE*** (original) ***DOOM PATROL.*** He also reported that Jenette Kahn had told him he could have ***SUPERMAN*** to draw whenever he liked, however, he went on to say that the terms of his current contract with Marvel would prevent him from working on the title.

When questioned about his likes and dislikes, Byrne listed Kirby, Ditko, Adams, Wrightson, Gil Kane, and the English artists Frank Bellamy and Frank Hampson as his favorite artists. He cited Superman as his favorite character, and he chose Batman as the character is has enjoyed the most among all series he's worked on.

Byrne thought his best artwork on ***THE X-MEN*** was in issue #137 and picked issue #143 as his favorite story. He revealed that he had created Vindicator, the leader of Alpha Flight, in 1971, and that therefore Vindicator's creation predates that of Captain Canuck. However, Byrne had to change Vindicator's costume after Captain Canuck made his debut. He again revealed that the ***IRON FIST*** villain, Sabretooth, had been intended to be Wolverine's father.

When asked what he thought comics should be, Byrne responded with, "Comics are an escapist medium. I don't want to see in comics what I read about in newspapers." The audience applauded vigorously in response to Byrne's remark.

Byrne plans to make a lifetime career out of drawing comics and cited Jack Kirby as a major role model.

Byrne later appeared with Chris Claremont on an ***X-MEN*** panel. Claremont revealed that the Starjammers would return to the regular ***X-MEN*** book in the late summer or fall of this year. He also announced that Neal Adams would be drawing the proposed 46-page graphic novel that will feature the New X-Men.

The last major panel at the convention focused on Marv Wolfman. Much of the time was spent discussing ***THE NEW TEEN TITANS.*** Wolfman revealed that Len Wein actually was responsible for the creation of the popular character, Raven, although Wolfman did take credit for naming her. Wolfman also explained that Starfire was a joint creation between himself and Wein, while Cyborg was solely a Wolfman creation. Wein also wanted Beast Boy to be a member of The Titans, and Wolfman agreed on condition that he be renamed The Changeling.

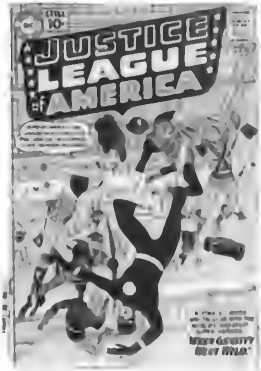
Wolfman said that he had plotted the first four issues, but that he had given artist George Perez permission to change anything he liked. Perez also has leeway with the pacing of the various fights as long as the outcomes remain what Wolfman intended them to be. However, Wolfman explained that beginning with issue #6, Perez will co-plot the stories. Perez also was credited with plotting the entire Cyborg sequence that appears in #8.

Woltman stated that he believed "the best work in comics" was done by writer-editors, citing Siegel and Shuster, Simon and Kirby, Harvey Kurtzman, and Will Eisner as examples. "The more people on a book, the weaker it is," Wolfman said. "Editors tend to be more timid about features than writers."

When questioned about his opinion of Stan Lee, Wolfman stated that in his opinion Lee was "more important as an editor than as a writer." He went on to explain that "Lee got Kirby, Ditko, and others to do their best" and "could take what Jack Kirby gave him and turn it into explosive copy."

—P.S.

20 Years Ago this Month



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THE UNLIKLIEST SUCCESS OF ALL

by Kurt Busiek

"The Most Unlikely Team Of All!," it said on the cover of ***POWER MAN #50***, the first issue to headline the new team of Power Man and Iron Fist—and it was a pretty unlikely team indeed. It could have been made into a blatant exploitation book—Bruce Lee meets John Shaft—except that the time for that sort of exploitation was long past, and it probably would have thrown the book into the same poor sales spiral that had killed Iron Fist's own magazine, and put Power Man in need of a sales assist. But ***POWER MAN/IRON FIST***, as the book is now known, has gone monthly after a long period of being one of Marvel's few bi-monthly series, due to the efforts of Mary Jo Duffy and Kerry Gammill. That they have achieved this success with this particular problem-magazine, considering that both are fairly new to the field, is a mark of their high level of talent, craftsmanship, and professionalism.

The concepts behind the Power Man/Iron Fist team make it a difficult book to write, considering the histories of the two characters and their super-hero careers. Luke Cage's (Power Man) series was always highly atmospheric, drawing much of its appeal from the aura of its setting. Where The Fantastic Four or the Avengers would jet around the globe and the universe, Power Man stuck pretty much to Harlem and its environs—the seamiest, grittiest parts of the city, rife with drug traffic, muggings, hookers, and such. Crime was more prevalent than law-and-order where Power Man worked, and his mission was less stopping crime than coping with the most dangerous and extreme elements before they could become firmly rooted. Luke Cage made a very fitting hero for this world—not an altruistic pure-hearted champion of justice, but a "hero-for-hire," a mercenary do-gooder who, though willing to help fight for right, wanted to make sure of making a living for himself out of it. As contrast to this grimy vision of New York City and its Times Square super-hero was the mystical paradise of the city of K'un-Lun and *its* representative and greatest warrior, Iron Fist.

Like the ***POWER MAN*** series, the ***IRON FIST*** book relied heavily on atmospherics, mixing its super-heroics with a flavor of the East and its philosophies. And Iron Fist, as Danny Rand, is hardly the streetwise realist Luke Cage is. For one thing, he was totally disconnected from the world for ten years, as he studied the martial arts in the legendary city of K'un-Lun, hidden deep in the Himalayas (so well hidden, in fact, that it only comes into direct contact with our world once a decade). Once in New York, Danny found himself to be a millionaire with no real worries in life aside from the usual troubles any super-hero has. Danny, unlike Cage, did not have to worry about surviving day-to-day existence, and as a result, hasn't learned as much about life. He came to New York originally just to fulfill a vow of vengeance. When the time came, though, for him to destroy the murderer of his parents and fulfill his oath, his childish idealism and Eastern philosophy reasserted themselves and he found he could not do it. Since then his idealism has undergone rigorous testing and Rand has become more sure of himself and his beliefs. But despite all of Rand's experiences in the "real world", he still hasn't lost much of his naivete or his innocence.

Clearly, combining these two series and their almost diametrically opposed stars is not an easy job. Their respective atmospheres, one contemplative and mystical while the other is resolutely realistic in the grittiest possible meaning of the word, cannot coexist in the same magazine. The first Power Man/Iron Fist teamup (in ***POWER MAN #48 & 49***) reflected this difficulty—the first half of the two part story was almost completely a typical ***IRON FIST*** story: it featured an Iron Fist villain, Iron Fist's supporting characters, Iron Fist's part of town (West-Side Manhattan), and Iron Fist as the hero. Power Man, not too surprisingly, played the heavy. By the second half of the story, issue #49, the story had shifted 180 degrees and was centered on Power Man. His actions were explained, his supporting cast introduced and spotlighted, his stomping grounds featured, and, by the simple expedient of giving the Iron Fist villain, Bushmaster, powers identical to Power Man's own, an appropriate Power Man foe was generated. Iron Fist's part, in what had started out as *his* story, was reduced to being the back-up to Power Man. He threw a few goons around and did a little fancy footwork, but all the important action was carried by Cage.

This first teamup set the stage for subsequent issues. Under Claremont, the first writer to tackle the writing chores on Marvel's version of ***THE ODD COUPLE***, the story emphasis shifted from one super-hero to the other, but Claremont never managed to find an approach that would allow him to integrate the two characters convincingly into one story. Also, Cage's position as an employee of Nightwing Restorations (the private eye agency run by former ***IRON FIST*** characters, Colleen Wing and Misty Knight) was never very credible, since he never did anything for them. Ed Hannigan's brief tenure as the book's writer exhibited a conscious effort to integrate the characters somehow (by making them both heroes-for-hire, and by giving Danny an understandable motive for it—wanting to understand money and how it works), but unfortunately the two issues Hannigan wrote by himself lost any sense of either series' atmosphere or characterizations, and served to prove that even with the best of intentions, ***POWER MAN/IRON FIST*** was a magazine that really needed something extra to make it work.

In fact, it looked like the team-up was doomed to failure, until Mary Jo Duffy and Trevor Von Eeden took over. Immediately, Duffy established the best way to handle two characters with strongly atmospheric backgrounds that refuse to merge—don't merge them, clash them! Her initial training sequence (in which Iron Fist was befuddled by Cage's refusal to understand the discipline of the martial arts, and then Danny turned around and offered the fiercely independent Cage some money) strongly established that the two men were mismatched, and did not understand each other's life. Surprisingly, that created a firm base for the series: The conflict between the millionaire and the "child of the streets"—between the innocent, privileged Danny Rand and the pragmatic, tough-shelled Luke Cage. Duffy also established Heroes for Hire as a fairly ritzy business, which made Iron Fist's participation in it much more believable. But while there's a lot more money and respect proliferating within it than there was in Luke Cage's old business (which he kept open—more character definition and story springboards), the crimes which Luke and Danny have investigated thus far have almost invariably each had a dirty side to them that plunged the story back into Luke's world. Rather than take turns doing an "***Iron Fist***" story, then a "***Power Man***" story, and so on, each story has worked in both worlds, and, as the team continues to stay together, their worlds have grown closer together. Iron Fist (along with the reader) has gotten used to the Times Square environment, and Luke has found the rich side of New York to be not as different as he'd thought.

Duffy's first story, a two-part Living Monolith adventure, was very well-handled until the villain appeared. The Monolith was hardly the right sort of foe for a down-to-Earth team like IF/PM, and it's difficult to say why the story was ever written. Jo Duffy certainly understands that Power Man and Iron Fist should fight a certain **type** of villain, and with the exception of this story, she has delivered that sort without fail. Perhaps she, having been an original X-Men fan before she became a professional writer, "just had to" do something derived from that series as soon as she got a regular assignment. If so, she certainly got her fannish impetuousity over with fast, because that story was the only instance in which she doesn't treat the series with a crisp, competent professionalism, writing for the book's needs, not her own fan fantasies. Even with the sporadic help of Trevor Von Eeden, who can sometimes be astonishingly good, but seldom for more than a panel or two (thankfully, the reverse is also true), the ***POWER MAN/IRON FIST*** series offered consistent quality.

Then, with the appearance of Kerry Gammill as regular penciller, the magazine took another leap in quality. The best way to describe it is to say that the art matched the writing. Gammill is a solid, clear storyteller who seems to want to interest the reader in the **story,** not in flashy pyrotechnics or overdone rendering. His tight, clear style is not incredibly original—his work looks to be very derivative of John Buscema's, with a little Byrne influence added, but he has used his technique far more effectively than most of Marvel's other artists. The most difficult of material (Power Man attempting to learn ***Ninjitsu*** in two panels, the destruction of the Gem Theatre, etc.) he has made look effortless, and his character work has always been dramatic and effective, whether he was dealing with a bizarrely aging Thunderbolt or with the feral Sabre-Tooth. Gammill's adaptable storytelling is well suited to a book like ***POWER MAN/IRON FIST,*** in which he may be called upon to illustrate ***anything,*** and make sure it holds the correct atmosphere for the reader. In the seven issues he has drawn (as of this writing), he has never once slackened in quality, and if he has had deadline troubles, I've yet to hear of it. Hopefully he will continue to do the same quality artwork on a monthly schedule as he did on the bimonthly.

OOOPS
SORRY, GEANTLE-MEN, YOU'RE A VERY FOR-MIDABLE BUNCH.
BUT I SPENT TEN YEARS IN A CITY WHERE THE MARTIAL ARTS ARE A WAY OF LIFE!
AH—!
©1981 Marvel Comics Group

Iron Fist demonstrates and describes his powers and background for new readers on page four. "Every issue, early on, [Duffy and Gammill] have managed to describe the two heroes and their powers in a way that is not space-consuming or irritable to the long-time reader..."

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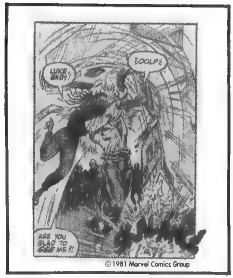
"[Gammill's] character work has always been dramatic and effective."

Speaking of professionalism, there is one little "gimmick" that Duffy and Gammill pull that I find noteworthy and laudable. Every issue, early on, they have managed to describe the two heroes and their powers in a way that is not space-consuming or irritable to the long-time reader, yet also has clued in the newcomer about the basics of the series. Some of the means through which they have discovered to do this are fascinating, such as when a young Power Man fan excitedly said: "Power Man is the baddest, strongest dude there is, an' he's got bulletproof skin, too!" (At that, a friend replied, "Wow!"), or Iron Fist, in the process of nonchalantly wiping out six or seven street thugs said (as he visually demonstrated his fighting skills), "Sorry, gentlemen. You're a very formidable bunch...but I spent ten years in a city where the martial arts are a way of life!" Paying this attention and courtesy to the casual readers (who do, after all, account for most of the newsstand comics sales) has been a welcome change from comics which seem to have only disdain for the new reader, expecting potential buyers to wade through months of (to them) confusing material before they can understand what's going on.

Last I sound too complimentary, there **are** still problems with ***POWER MAN/IRON FIST.***

The endings of the stories always have had the same air of finality to them, whether the story is concluded or not. For example, the latest Bushmaster story (#67-8), though a lot of loose threads are running around in it, is wrapped up neatly and totally by the end—and reads that way. But the "conclusion" to the "***Jade Tiger***" story had the same feeling of a clean finish to it, and the villain hadn't even been ***seen*** yet. The mystery man behind the theft of the Jade Tiger was a nagging plot thread, except that it didn't nag! Due to that ending, the reader almost wilfully forgot about the mysterious villain, which could not have been what the writer had in mind. It's a small problem, but it's there. Another difficulty is that though ***POWER MAN/IRON FIST*** is one of the few comics that has consistently tried to be funny as well as dramatic, it could be a lot funnier. There's nothing wrong with the gag scenes as far as content goes, it's just that (with rare exceptions) Duffy and Gammill haven't been certain how the reading public will accept gags in their comics, and have handled the funny stuff a little too carefully. Notable instances of where it was done right (or almost right) were: when Luke's girlfriend Harmony caused him to drop and smash their brand-new Coke machine, the



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previously-mentioned "Luke tries to emulate ***Ninjitsu***" scene, and the scene in which Danny tried to contact Bushmaster on the phone (which began with a marvelous staccato dialogue between Danny and a gunsel—and immediately became deadly serious, thus proving that one ***can*** achieve both comedic and dramatic effects in a very small space.) If Duffy and Gammill would loosen up with their humor, and make no bones about its supposedly being funny, it would be far more successful.

The largest problem with the series, though, is one that I don't think can be solved, and it is this: highly entertaining as ***POWER MAN/IRON FIST*** is, I won't be very sorry when Duffy and Gammill leave (provided they do some other comic regularly). The charm, humor, and (in my opinion) commercial appeal of the series comes from Mary Jo Duffy and Kerry Gammill, and not from Power Man and Iron Fist. The concept is still an untenable one, if in the hands of less skilled craftsmen than the current creative team. They have imbued the book with enough class to make it one of the high points at Marvel, but they could do that with any series. When and if they leave ***POWER MAN/IRON FIST***, it will probably lapse right back into the aimless miasma in which it languished before they got to it. But still, they may go and radically improve something else, something in which the improvement would be permanent (or as permanent as anything is in comics)—or, of course, they might just stay on ***POWER MAN/IRON FIST*** as long as Curt Swan has been on ***"Superman."***

Actually, that's not a bad idea... ●

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THUNDARR

OVER THE AIRWAVES

by Steve Gerber as told to Paul Dini

Something new has come to Saturday morning television. There, shining like a rough-cut diamond atop the scrap heap of animated super-heroes, goofy monsters, and snickering doggies, is television's first true sword-and-sorcery series, ***THUNDARR THE BARBARIAN.*** Produced by Ruby-Spears (***PLASTIC MAN, FANGFACE***) ***THUNDARR*** follows the adventures of a Conan-esque warrior of the far distant future. With his companions Ariel the sorceress and Ookla the Mok (a gigantic creature resembling a combination wolf, ape, and human), Thundarr roams the strangely-altered Earth of a post-cataclysmic future, battling monsters, wizards, and demons at every turn.

Such a series would seem more at home in the pages of a comic book than on a television screen, and it is not surprising that ***THUNDARR***'s creation springs directly from several talented expatriates of the comics medium. Steve Gerber, ***THUNDARR***'s co-creator and story editor, is well-known to comics fans for his work on Marvel's ***MAN-THING*** and ***THE DEFENDERS,*** and as the creator of ***HOWARD THE DUCK.*** After leaving mainstream comics nearly three years ago, Gerber turned to animation, scripting some episodes of Ruby-Spears' ***PLASTIC MAN*** and ***MIGHTY MAN AND YUKK*** series. While working on a ***MIGHTY MAN*** episode that parodied the sword-and-sorcery genre, Gerber hit upon the notion of doing a barbarian-type animated series and playing it straight.

"I was very familiar with the whole sword-and-sorcery genre," Gerber told ***COMICS FEATURE,*** "from my work in comics, from having read a lot of the stuff on my own. It struck me that nothing even remotely like this had ever been done on television, and that alone made it an interesting area for a series proposal. Essentially, I took the idea of doing a barbarian series for Saturday morning to Joe Ruby (R-S executive producer, with Ken Spears), and he liked the concept. I gather, from what I know now of how these things proceed, that Joe proposed it to ABC. The network showed some interest in it, and we began to develop the show."

Many unique projects are developed by animation studios, but pitifully few of them ever make it to the Saturday morning screen. Rather than take a chance on a wholly original character, the networks have traditionally opted for adapting established properties with a "pre-sold" following. In early 1980, even Ruby-Spears was developing series based upon such well-known comics properties as ***SPIDER-MAN*** and ***DAREDEVIL.*** In fact, these two series were in direct competition with the studio's then-unknown barbarian for the same precious time-slot. Eventually, ***THUNDARR*** won out.

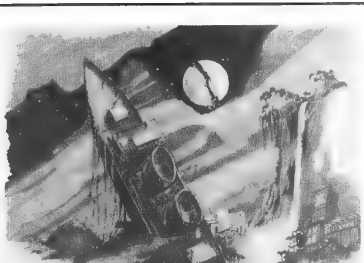
"What happened," Gerber explained, "as far as I can ascertain, is that ABC's testing led them to the conclusion that ***THUNDARR*** was a better risk than those other two characters. Spider-Man has been overexposed. The kids are aware of the character, they recognize him immediately, they like him, but they weren't particularly interested in seeing a new series about him—especially the female segment of the audience. ***DAREDEVIL*** was interesting to the kids, but, as it turns out, he's virtually unknown outside the relatively small comics readership. So a ***DAREDEVIL*** series was

as big a gamble for the network as ***THUNDARR***. When it came down to a choice between the two, the network preferred ***THUNDARR***, for exactly the same reason, I imagine, that Marvel made the decision to publish ***CONAN*** eleven years ago: it was different. The ABC schedule already had its fill of superheroes, and our show offered a change of pace, a little variety."

The series' main characters were created by Gerber and Joe Ruby. "I believe it was Joe who suggested the threesome," Gerber remembers, "a barbarian type, a monster, and a female who might or might not be a sorceress. He also came up with the cosmic disaster concept, the runaway planet causing the cataclysm that wiped out civilization on Earth. It struck me as a much more original idea than the usual nuclear or environmental catastrophe on which so many of these stories rely.

"Then he provided me with the ideal situation in which to work. He more or less left me alone in a little room with nothing but a typewriter, some paper, a few reference sources, and a lot of peace and quiet, and over a period of three or four weeks, I filled in all the background detail on Thundarr, the supporting characters, and New Earth. I was in a separate building, away from most of the studio operations, and I would make the trek across the parking lots only when I needed to consult with Joe on some or another aspect of the development.

"Thundarr's personality evolved over those four weeks. I knew what I wanted, which was essentially a large, strong, brawny, but illiterate character—a guy with no formal education at all. His only guide to his personal conduct would be his own instincts, his own sense of fair and unfair, right and wrong. He would have a native, but undeveloped, intellect, whereas Ariel would be a much more civilized, and therefore more cautious, more rational type. Ookla would be entirely a creature of emotion, functioning only slightly above the level of a beast, a character who could go from sweet and cuddly to totally berserk in the blink of an eye, reacting to an outside stimulus."



© 1981 Ruby-Spears Productions

A ruined ship caught in the remnants of a lake, by Jack Kirby. "Kirby's detailed renderings of the heroes in action, of the world they lived in, and of the villains they would meet helped focus the series in the minds of the network executives."

While Ruby and Gerber were working up treatments and story ideas, comics artist Alex Toth was called in to provide visual designs for the three major characters. Though his work is rarely seen in comics these days, Toth is no stranger to the super-hero genre, having illustrated many of DC's most popular characters of the 1940s and having designed such memorable creations as ***SPACE GHOST*** and ***THE HERCULOIDS*** for Hanna-Barbera.

After the character designs for Thundarr, Ariel, and Ookla were finalized, Toth stepped aside, and master cartoonist Jack Kirby took over to render Thundarr's future world and the bizarre creatures that dwell there.

In the transition from comics to animation, "King" Kirby clearly lost none of his flair for visual inventiveness. Gerber recounted: "Buzz Dixon wrote a script called ***'Treasure of the Moks'***, which was set in a village of Moks like Ookla. They lived in very primitive conditions and fashioned their tools and weapons out of leftover scrap from Old Earth. Jack came in with a page of Mok weaponry, things I—they were inconceivable. There was one of the nastiest-looking weapons I have ever seen, made from the handle of a wrench, the head of a piston, and the blade of a linoleum knife, stacked in that order. I was totally knocked out. Jack had to be ***thinking*** like a Mok to create something like that. I couldn't believe it—and he does stuff like this all the time. It comes completely naturally to him. The man totally astounds me!"

Kirby's detailed renderings of the heroes in action, of the world they lived in, and of the villains they would meet helped focus the series in the minds of the network executives

"Yes," said the network executives, "we want it to be sword-and-sorcery—just like *TARZAN!*" They saw [primarily] the superficial resemblance of the half-naked hero and the savage setting, according to Gerber.

WHY DID YOU SAVE ME, WAZ-DON? YOU ARE NOT TOR-O-DON. NOT OF MY PEOPLE—!
ALL LIFE IS WORTH FIGHTING FOR, MU-JA! TARZAN WOULD HAVE DONE THE SAME HAD YOU BEEN A WORM!

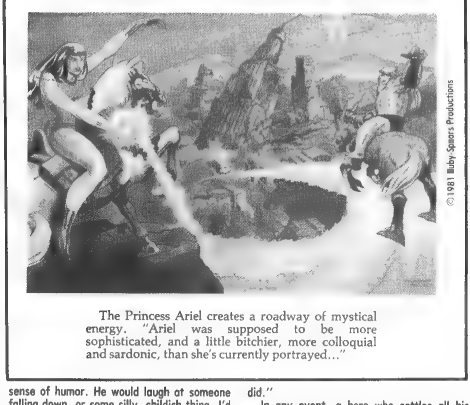
© 1981 Edgar Rice Burroughs, Inc

who were unfamiliar with the sword-and-sorcery tradition. "We had a lot of problems at first," Gerber recalled, "because no one at the network really knew what sword-and-sorcery was. We kept hearing things like, 'Yes we want it to be sword-and-sorcery—just like ***TARZAN!***' And you just sort of stare blankly and ask them, 'Where are the swords and where is the sorcery in ***TARZAN?***' They saw the superficial resemblance of the half-naked hero and the savage setting, and that was it. And they need to liken everything to something they already knew. ***TARZAN*** was the model they were using; Conan and the pulp style of sword-and-sorcery was the model I was using."

Apparently, the model of Filmation's ***TARZAN*** series was more vivid for the network executives, for when it came time to choose Thundarr's voice, one of the first people they contacted was Bob Ridgely, the actor who, not surprising, does the voice of Tarzan. "The network knew of my work on ***TARZAN*** and ***FLASH GORDON*** and called me in to audition for the role," Ridgely told ***FEATURE.*** "It was the longest audition I ever had, and Michael Ansara, I remember, was auditioning the same day. Personally, I though he was terrific, but the auditions went on and on, and I said to Alan Dinehart (the show's voice director), whom I had not met before, 'Gee, Alan, anything go wrong? What took so long?' And he said, 'We just do it until we get it the way we want it.' And I must have done something right, because I wound up getting the role."

Though Ridgely is an accomplished stage and screen actor (he has had roles in such films as ***BLAZING SADDLES, MELVIN AND HOWARD,*** and Mel Brooks' upcoming ***HISTORY OF THE WORLD, PART I***), he has a particular fondness for cartoons. "I love doing voices," he says, "especially villains, because they have a much greater range of emotions than the hero. Thundarr, in particular, is a harder character for me to play, because he's always kept at one level. He's always angry, even when saying the simplest lines. He might make a casual remark to Ariel, like, 'What is this new world?' But because of the way the network and Ruby-Spears envision Thundarr's character, the line will come out much harsher: 'What *is* this new world?!' He's always up there, always angry, and it's hard for me to keep him at that level during a long recording session."

In the beginning, Ridgely experimented quite a bit with Thundarr's voice, trying to find the perfect sound for a barbarian. "Sometimes I'd look at a script and couldn't believe the complexity of Thundarr's lines. He'll have a line like, 'I am dumbfounded by the extent of...' whatever. Thundarr, if he's truly the barbarian of the future, where did he get this wonderful vocabulary? The same with Tarzan. Who taught them to speak like that? In Thundarr's case, especially, I wanted to simplify the dialogue more. Instead of crying, 'Humans are not for hunting!,' muttering, 'Humans not be hunted!' Also, if he has a sense of humor, it should be a very primitive sense of humor. He would laugh at someone falling down, or some silly, childish thing. I'd love it if Ariel were even more sophisticated, and Thundarr was this huge, good-looking guy she was enamored of, but a true barbarian. He wants to settle everything with the sword."



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The Princess Ariel creates a roadway of mystical energy. "Ariel was supposed to be more sophisticated, and a little bitchier, more colloquial and sardonic, than she's currently portrayed..."

Gerber agrees, disagrees, and elaborates. As he told ***FEATURE:*** "Ariel was supposed to be more sophisticated, and a little bit bitchier, more colloquial and sardonic, than she's currently portrayed. Here, we ran into network problems. The new TV rule of thumb is that all characters in a series must be likeable—all the time. This seems to apply to prime time as well as Saturday morning, and perhaps more than any other factor, it probably accounts for most network programming being very nearly unwatchable. You're being presented with mannequins, not characters. They cast a show the same way they cast a toothpaste commercial, for 'likeability'. You get a lot of pleasant, forgettable faces. And because the characters can't say or do anything that might make you like them any less, you get a lot of pleasant and forgettable characters, as well. They're non-entities by design.

"Thundarr, in his peculiar way, is actually quite an exception to the rule. In theory, his solution to any given problem is always the same—hack it into bite-size bits. But Bob is confusing 'barbarian' with 'savage' when he talks about simplifying Thundarr's speech pattern. We intentionally strove for an archaic, yet very direct manner of speaking for Thundarr. He's unschooled, but not totally inarticulate. The Old Testament, after all, was written by people who came out of nearly identical circumstances of slavery as Thundarr did."

In any event, a hero who settles all his problems with a sword doesn't sit very well with the network's department of Broadcast Standards and Practices. Since the big crackdown on violence in children's programs ten years ago, BS&P has held a tight rein on all animated shows and it is quick to cut out anything that looks too scary or too suggestive for young viewers.

Naturally, with ***THUNDARR***'s heavy reliance on swordplay and action, the department looks hard at each episode.

"Thundarr is a very different character concept for Saturday morning," Gerber said. "This kind of show hasn't been done in a very long while. We wanted to make the show as nearly pure adventure as we could, without the kind of cloying, preachy, mealy-mouthed social-consciousness crap that hobbled shows like ***SHAZAM, ISIS,*** and, for a time, ***SUPERFRIENDS.*** We wanted to do adventure, suspense, and, insofar as it was allowed, horror—in other words, to remain true to the spirit of the sword-and-sorcery genre. We've done more, actually, than I expected we'd be able to."

Of course, concessions have had to be made on both sides. Originally, Thundarr was to use a glowing broadsword as his weapon, but BS&P prohibits the depiction of sharp objects and real weapons on Saturday morining. This led to the creation of the Sunsword, actually a very nice visual effect and one more in keeping with the fanciful sorcery/science aspects of the series. Sometimes network changes work for the better, sometimes they don't. Gerber notes, "I'll never forgive them for forbidding our werewolves, in ***The***

Brotherhood of Night', from biting anyone. The network insisted that they had to transform their victims into werewolves with glowing claws or something—and then, naturally, we couldn't show the claw attack. For me, that severely damaged the credibility of Thundarr's world, the ambience of savagery. It was like Standards and Practices was refereeing a fight between two little kids—no biting, no scratching allowed!"

The subject of violence is a bone of contention between networks and creative personnel. Many writers and artists feel that the networks are stifling creativity and inventiveness in current animated shows to win the approval of overly-sensitive concerned-parent groups and child psychologists.

"The networks have generally been following a policy of appeasement, because their primary consideration is always the bottom line," Gerber told ***FEATURE.*** "Groups like Action for Children's Television and the National P.T.A. have gained whatever influence they possess with the threat of sponsor boycotts, not because anyone acknowledges the legitimacy of their views.

"You've seen their effect in those edited-for-television ***DAFFY DUCK*** cartoons on NBC, with ***BUGS*** on CBS, with ***MIGHTY MOUSE AND HECKLE AND JECKLE.*** We have a barbarian who's not allowed to hit anybody; throwing a punch is forbidden on ABC. Superman can't come bursting through walls on ***SUPERFRIENDS***, because BS&P considers that an emulable action; they're afraid some kid will hurl himself against a wall and break his nose, trying to imitate Superman. Standards and Practices has hamstrung the creative end of the business, because they believe, I'm convinced, that children are stupid, violence-prone, and feeble-minded by nature. I don't swallow that at all."

And yet, despite network restrictions, ***THUNDARR*** succeeds. The design and animation are pleasing to look at, and most of the scripts are swift-moving, well-plotted adventure stories. They make no demands on the older viewer's intelligence, but neither do they insult it.

"I am convinced," said Gerber, "that one of the reasons we have a little more latitude creatively on ***THUNDARR*** is that Saturday morning viewing levels have begun to drop across the board for the networks. The kids either are not watching at all, or they've turned to the independent stations that are showing the uncut Warner Brothers cartoons, the 1950s ***SUPERMAN*** and ***LONE RANGER*** episodes, and ***I SPY.*** There's nothing surprising about this. Psychologists are very adept at tailoring a program to their specifications, but they are completely unqualified to judge the entertainment value of a dramatic presentation. The kids simply don't like the shows the pressure groups think they should like. The programming people at the networks are realizing, I think, that there may be a greater financial risk in appeasing the shrinks than in listening to the creators' point of view."

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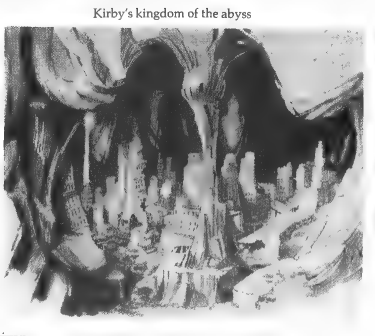
Ookla the Mok destroys a helicopter, in one of Kirby's production drawings. "Ookla would be entirely a creature of emotion...a character who could go from sweet and cuddly to totally berserk in the blink of an eye..."

This point alone makes ***THUNDARR*** an important show. If a series like ***THUNDARR*** can show educators, concerned parents, and psychologists that there is a way to do an inventive Saturday morning show without an overuse of graphic violence, perhaps the restrictions will be lifted a little more, and the creators will be given more chance to experiment. In terms of ratings, the series is doing phenomenally well, and though there is as yet no format word from ABC, it appears the show will be renewed for another season.

ABC's Vice-President in charge of Children's Programming, Marilyn Olin, is "delighted" with the look and concept of ***THUNDARR*** and equally happy with its reception from young viewers.

With the growing success of ***THUNDARR***, it seems that the network door is now opening to more fantasy-related series, and it will be interesting to see what the longterm impact of sword-and-sorcery will be on the television medium.●

Kirby's kingdom of the abyss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IS TELEVISION READY FOR... The INFERIOR five

NO!

by Richard Howell

"Every year they do this to me. I have more than enough work to do, and Joe Ruby [of Ruby-Spears Animation Studios] confronts me with a project I just can't resist—once it was The Phantom. The next year it was ***THE INFERIOR FIVE.***"

So recollected Mark Evanier, a TV writer who is also a former comics writer and a long-time comics fan. Evanier's professional credits include serving (with Steve Sherman) as assistant editor to Jack Kirby's line of experimental DC comics in the early 1970s, and writing the ***"Korak, Son of Tarzan"*** feature for the Edgar Rice Burroughs licensed comics. More recently, he has contributed in various capacities to television shows like ***WELCOME BACK, KOTTER*** (as story editor), ***THAT'S INCREDIBLE,*** and ***PINK LADY*** (as head writer).

"I was working on ***PINK LADY,***" explained Evanier to ***COMICS FEATURE,*** "which was like three full-time jobs at once, when Joe called. Most [TV show] pilot presentations take weeks to prepare, and Joe needed this one done over the weekend. I couldn't spare the time, I had my own work to do, I had other commitments. I asked Joe what the project was. He said, ***'THE INFERIOR FIVE.'*** I said, 'I'll be right over.'"

The Inferior Five, it should be noted for the uninitiated, were the stars of an unconventional, satirical DC comics series in the middle 1960s. The group consisted of children of a combination of marriages within a WWII Justice League of America parody. The farcical element entered into the series in the fact that the children's powers, sometimes combinations of their parents' powers, and personalities, tended towards the useless—not to say ridiculous. The Inferior Five's leader, Merryman, was the child of two non-super members of the old group, and was built like Woody Allen. Awkwardman inherited his powers from his parents, Mr. Might and the Mermaid. Unfortunately, whatever benefits the group might have received from his great strength were undercut by his extreme clumsiness (he had flippers for feet). The Blimp's father could fly at super-speed; The Blimp was ungainly fat and could but hover. White Feather's father, The Bowman, passed along his archery skills to his son—however, his son was an inveterate coward. Princess Power's daughter was very strong and very stupid. She was named Dumb Bunny, and the name fit. Together, The Inferior Five clashed with numerous super-threats to society, most of whom were broad parodies of Marvel characters of the period. The book was a cult item from its inception, yet it survived through three tryout issues of ***SHOWCASE (#62-3, 65),*** and ten issues of its own title. Although Joe Orlando was the strip's original artist, Mike Sekowsky became more associated with the feature, completing seven issues to Orlando's two. E. Nelson Bridwell was the series' original writer and stayed with the strip until the entire staff changed with issue #7. ***THE INFERIOR FIVE***'s series has the questionable distinction of publishing an issue in which the series' characters did nothing of any significance and in fact appeared solely as walk-ons (#6).

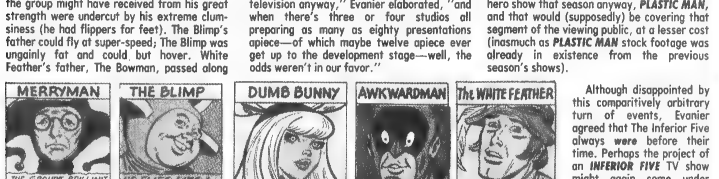
Evanier's ability is highly enough regarded among the California animated studios that he is one of a handful of "preferred" writers—the ones whom producers would ***rather*** prepare their new shows' initial concept presentations to the networks. ***THE INFERIOR FIVE***'s prospects brightened considerably more due to Evanier's enthusiasm for the project.

"I'm one of the most devoted ***INFERIOR FIVE*** fans there are," Evanier explained. "When I did my presentation, I supplemented it with copies of the actual comics and my page of original Mike Sekowsky ***INFERIOR FIVE*** art (that I got for having a letter printed)."

Although the network executives were very favorably impressed by Evanier's presentation (one called him up later in the week to compliment him on it), there were still obstacles to be overcome, and any one of them could conceivably cause the ***INFERIOR FIVE*** show to be rejected. "There's a very limited amount of programming time on Saturday morning television anyway," Evanier elaborated, "and when there's three or four studios all preparing as many as eighty presentations apiece—of which maybe twelve apiece ever get up to the development stage—well, the odds weren't in our favor."

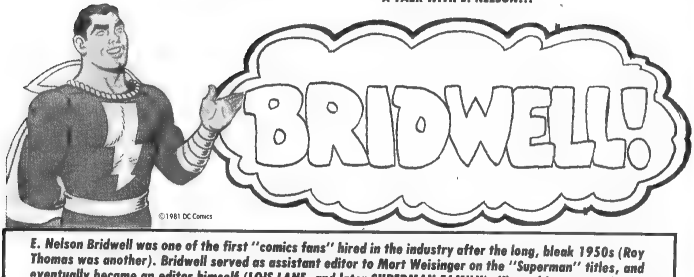
"Some changes in the *I-5* were made: Awkwardman's secret identity (Leander Brent) was changed to Nelson Brent (both in deference to the distancing quality of the more antiquated former name, and as a tribute to *INFERIOR FIVE* comics scripter E. Nelson Bridwell); White Feather's civilian profession was altered from fashion photographer to zookeeper ("The fashion photographer jokes mainly revolved around the fact that W.F. was afraid of girls, but the job was seen as a *PLAYBOY* photographer role, and the Bureau of Standards and Practices wouldn't care for that. Also, White Feather was afraid of animals, too, so it would've all worked out."). Evanier stood firm, though, on the character of Dumb Bunny: "Everyone—Standards and Practices, the sponsors—they're all very sensitive right now about presenting only highly *positive* female characters on Saturday morning TV, but their conception of what those are are somewhat limited," he explained. "Dumb Bunny, though, was such a terrifically-conceived character—the strength, the attitude, the costume—it all works! So I finally won them over by explaining that she was like a classic dramatic heroine. You know, they all had their tragic flaws, and hers is dumbness." Bunny's occupation was altered, though, from a model (perceived as potentially sexist) to a construction worker.

Despite all the enthusiasm and talent put into the development, though, *THE INFERIOR FIVE* show was ultimately rejected. The reason: Ruby-Spears had a prior commitment to be providing another "humorous" superhero show that season anyway, *PLASTIC MAN,* and that would (supposedly) be covering that segment of the viewing public, at a lesser cost (inasmuch as *PLASTIC MAN* stock footage was already in existence from the previous season's shows).


MERRYMAN
THE GROUP'S BRILLIANT LEADER, WHO USED TO BE A 97-POUND WEAKLING BEFORE HE LOST WEIGHT!
THE BLIMP
HE FLIES LIKE A BIRD WITH THE SPEED OF A SNAIL.
©1981 DC Comics
DUMB BUNNY
STRONGER THAN AN OX--AND ALMOST AS INTELLIGENT!
AWKWARDMAN
MORE POWERFUL THAN A LOCOMOTIVE --BUT ALWAYS GETTING DERAILED!
The WHITE FEATHER
THE ONLY BIRD WHO'S CHICKEN!

Although disappointed by this comparitively arbitrary turn of events, Evanier agreed that The Inferior Five always *were* before their time. Perhaps the project of an *INFERIOR FIVE* TV show might again come under consideration. And if it does, Evanier commented, "We'll be ready."●

A TALK WITH E. NELSON...



E. Nelson Bridwell was one of the first "comics fans" hired in the industry after the long, bleak 1950s (Roy Thomas was another). Bridwell served as assistant editor to Mort Weisinger on the "Superman" titles, and eventually became an editor himself (LOIS LANE, and later SUPERMAN FAMILY). His real impact on the industry, however, has been both as an innovator (with THE INFERIOR FIVE, THE MANIAKS, the international heroes in SUPER FRIENDS) and a preserver of the integrity of some fine old strips (as with SHAZAM!). Nelson Bridwell has been starting trends—which later become "innovative"—in the industry for many years now, and maintaining its more esoteric strips with charm and dignity.

This interview was originally conducted under the auspices of THE COMICS JOURNAL, but was offered to COMICS FEATURE by Margaret O'Connell who wanted to see it in print before SUPER FRIENDS was discontinued. It was conducted in late March, 1980, transcribed by Paul Dini, edited and approved by Nelson Bridwell, and final-edited by Richard Howell.

O'CONNELL: One thing I've noticed about your work—your more recent work, especially—is that it's more accessible to a general non-fan audience than most current comics are. Most of the material that you write or have written, like ***SUPER FRIENDS***, and the ***"Shazam"*** strip in ***WORLD'S FINEST***, and even material that you've edited, like the DC anthologies, ***SUPERMAN, BATMAN, AND SHAZAM "From the Thirties to the Seventies"*** series seemed to be designed to be easily understood by people who are basically unfamiliar with the "DC Universe." This is really contrary to the prevailing trend in comics to write stories that are basically unintelligible to someone who hasn't been reading that particular book for a year, or even reading other comics from the same company. I was wondering, have you been consciously bucking this trend, or did it just happen?

BRIDWELL: That was one thing that I always did. I learned very early in this game, from when I was assisting Mort Weisinger: You've got to keep in mind that while there are a lot of people who've read about the characters before, there are always new people coming along, and you've got to realize that you can't count on them to know the whole legend of the character. Even Superman, Batman, and Wonder Woman are going to be new to somebody. I think that is one reason we have the lead-ins in front of the logos, because we have to introduce the characters without having to take up part of the space from the story. As for ***SUPER FRIENDS,*** that in particular is important, I think, because so many of the kids, the younger kids, are going to come there from the television show (since it is certainly one of the best rated TV shows on Saturday morning). And yet I kept in mind that this was going to have to be not only something that the kids could enjoy, but something that wouldn't insult one's intelligence, so that an older audience could enjoy it, too. I'm happy to say that it seems to have worked. I was even told by Marv Wolfman that ***SUPER FRIENDS*** is one of his favorites. (Laughs.) Also, that series serves to introduce the kids to a wide variety of comics. And that is one reason, I think, that using frequent guest-stars helps out. We've had all the Justice Leaguers in at one time or another, we've had Black Orchid, Supergirl, and of course, we've had various villains who've fought The Flash, Wonder Woman, and others. After that, when a kid sees a character in ***SUPER FRIENDS***, say, The Flash, when the kid sees a ***FLASH*** comic on the stands, he'll think, "Ahl i want to find out more about him, 'cause he was in ***SUPER FRIENDS.***" As I say, make it intelligible, but make it interesting. This is what I keep in mind all the time.

O'CONNELL: I thought it was interesting the way you used the mythologies of various nations in those issues [of ***SUPER FRIENDS***] in which you introduced those foreign heroes, and you actually got all the details right (at least in the ones I knew enough about to tell), which is something you didn't get until recently in something like ***THOR.***

BRIDWELL: Yes, that's one thing I'm very conscientious about. I've been interested in mythology/folklore since I was a kid. I've read up so much on it. The thing is, I have many of the original sources of these things. I have at home a number of the books that give us the stories of the Greek and Roman heroes and gods. And when I was doing the bit on the Olympians, I knew that Euphemus was a super-fast hero, very much like The Flash, because I read it in ***THE ARGONAUTICA*** of Apollonius of Rhodes. Whereas if you read, simply, say, Robert Graves' version, he has altered it to make [Euphemus] a swimmer, rather than someone who runs across the surface of the water. That, incidentally, is apparently what they used in the movie ***JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS,*** where they treated Euphemus that way.) But because I went to the original source, I was able to get the original description. I think that's the best way to do it. I have volumes and volumes on Irish mythology and on the fairy folklore and such. This, I think will help greatly with the Jack O'Lantern character.

O'CONNELL: Yeah, I was really impressed that you got down the distinction between trooping fairies and solitary fairies.

BRIDWELL: Absolutely. We did have a leprechaun in the first story, and you could see him sitting in the woods, hammering on one shoe. I found out that leprechauns are never seen working on a pair of shoes, always one shoe. I created a character who is based on one of the

solitary fairies, and who is Jack O'Lantern's companion. We've also done something a little different in that Jack is probably the first super-hero whose secret identity is that of a farmer. That gets him out into the country where you can find the little people.

O'CONNELL: I've also noticed that there's what I might call a feminist strain in your writing, because when you created all those international heroes, a lot of them were women, and later on, in ***SUPER FRIENDS #14***, you created The Elementals, which was the first super-group that had more women than men in it.

BRIDWELL: Well, I suppose there is that feeling that women have been under-represented in the super-hero books in the past, possibly because so many attempts to give them their own magazines have failed. As a matter of fact, even ***WONDER WOMAN*** has been in trouble in the past, and kept going because she was so valuable as a merchandising item. But you've seen characters like Ms. Marvel, and I don't know how many others, come and go.

O'CONNELL: The Cat...

BRIDWELL: Shanna the She-Devil, and so on. There have only been a handful that have held out for any length of time. One thinks of Sheena, for example. And Mary Marvel, of course, was the first of the Marvels to lose her own book.

O'CONNELL: She was the last one to get her own book, too.

BRIDWELL: Yes, right. Incidentally, there was to have been a ***MARY MARVEL*** book right after her creation—and now we have the stats of the original, which was never published (probably because of the war-time paper shortage). Since the figure on the cover of the actual ***MARY MARVEL #1*** looks more like she did in those days, I take it that was the cover to have gone on there. But as for the other stories, two of them—drastically cut-down versions—eventually appeared in an issue of ***MARVEL FAMILY,*** but the rest of it, as far as I know, has never been published—which would probably make that one of the rarest comic books of all time.

But at any rate, I've always felt we should have as many heroines as we could get, and that's why I'm glad to see a few more here and there. But as for The Elementals, there's a rather interesting story in that. When I was creating them, I knew the names first of all. The Gnome had to be masculine, Undine and Sylph had to be feminine. What about Salamander? Well, I remembered a story I had read by William Seabrook, I believe, about a man who conjures up a fire-spirit, a Salamander. It appears in the form of a beautiful woman and destroys him. Because of that, The Salamander, in my mind, came across as a woman. And it just occurred to me, why not? After all, why do there have to be as many men as women in a group? Why not make it a little different?

And that, incidentally, was many years before I ever used them. You'd be surprised at how often you come up with something and you don't get a chance to use it for a long time. I dreamed those up long before I came to work here. When I was still a kid, I created Owlwoman, for example. Some of the characters in ***THE INFERIOR FIVE*** are based on characters I had when I was a kid.

O'CONNELL: This is very interesting, your mentioning that you had been creating these characters since even before you came to work here, because in a column in issue #17 of the British fanzine, ***BEM,*** which came out about two years ago, Rich Morrissey used you and Jack Kirby as examples of two different types of comics writers. He had this oversimplified scheme in which Kirby was an example of what [Morrissey] called the "creative style" of comics writing—he was always inventing new characters and concepts. You were the example of the more analytical type who does research and revives old villains and gives them new twists and stuff like that.

BRIDWELL: Well, of course, I do both, actually. As a matter of fact one of the international heroes, The Rising Sun, is the name of a villain I used in Junior High. At that time there was still a war with Japan. When I started dreaming up these international heroes, it occured to me—well, that's still a good name nobody's used. Why not?

O'CONNELL: Okay, even though you're not generally perceived as one of the more "fannish" writers in the sense of attracting a cult following and all that, you have done some very fannish things, like ***THE INFERIOR FIVE.*** Was that entirely your own idea?

BRIDWELL: Jack Miller came up with the idea of a group of incompetent heroes, and at first he came up with the title ***THE INFERIOR FOUR.*** When I created five heroes, he changed it to ***THE INFERIOR FIVE.*** I completely created the heroes as a clown set, and Joe Orlando created the costumes. We're just hoping we'll get some credit on the TV version, if it ever sells.

AS WE GO FORTH TO BATTLE THE FORCES OF EVIL, LET US NEVER FORGET WHAT WE ARE FIGHTING FOR - THE ONE THING THAT MEANS THE MOST TO ALL OF US
- OUR LIVES!
SCRIPT BY-E. NELSON BRIDWELL
ART BY-JOE ORLANDO & MIKE ESPOSITO
©1981 DC Comics

O'CONNELL: One of the things that I thought was most interesting about ***THE INFERIOR FIVE*** was that it was about second-generation super-heroes.

BRIDWELL: Yeah, because I had to have some reason for them to go into action as a team. I thought this would be a good excuse. They had to please their parents.

O'CONNELL: Was this before or after the first serious treatment of second-generation super-heroes? [This refers to the story in ***GIANT-SIZE AVENGERS #1*** in which it was established that Quicksilver and The Scarlet Witch were the son and daughter of The Whizzer and Miss America.]

BRIDWELL: I know that came long after I did the first ***INFERIOR FIVE.*** I guess...come to think of it, I can't think of any true second-generation super-heroes along that line that had come up before then. Of course, you could say in a way there was a new generation of super-heroes that started with the new Flash.

O'CONNELL: Now even in ***SUPER FRIENDS,*** where it is constantly more

accessible to the general audience, you do have an occasional fannish undertone, such as the instance in which you went to such trouble to reconcile the discrepancies between the established DC universe and the universe portrayed on the TV show.

BRIDWELL: Yes, some people suggested a whole new parallel Earth for the Super Friends, but I thought that would be pushing it a little. Also, it would be much easier to get the kids reading the other magazines if we tied it together. It really was simpler.

As for any fannishness, I would tend to say it's less fannishness than a kind of a wish to do it neatly—make everything fit into place. I remembered getting a bit perturbed at times when I was a kid by having things that didn't fit. For example, you knew that The Atom had met a certain type of Martian when he went to Mars in a ***"Justice Society"*** story. And yet when Wonder Woman went to Mars, it was a whole different Mars than The Atom's. And when Superman, or any of the others went to Mars, the Martians were also different. So it became obvious to me that they just weren't paying enough attention to what each writer was doing—and, of course, the series themselves were not always consistent. Mort Weisinger, around the late 1950s, came up with whole new origins for Green Arrow and Aquaman, both of which he had created back in the 1940s.

O'CONNELL: You have had various incidents, though, where you did seem to be straightening out some sort of continuity problem.

BRIDWELL: Definitely.

O'CONNELL: Like in ***SUPER FRIENDS #32***, you had several scenes of Wonder Woman without her Amazon bracelets, but not going totally mad.

BRIDWELL: That was because of the first story in which her bracelets were removed (I reprinted it awhile back in ***FOUR STAR SPECTACULAR***), losing her bracelets simply removed all restraints. So she no longer had any qualms about attacking the villains wildly in such a way that she might kill them. She was still against the same people, but there were absolutely no restraints on her. And I felt that since this is the original legend, let's stick with it. As I say, I have a kind of orderly mind that way.

O'CONNELL: And then you brought Black Orchid back into DC continuity in ***SUPER FRIENDS #31*** after she had just vanished five years ago.

BRIDWELL: That was after a meeting in which some of the editors agreed to use various characters in order to keep them alive. And Julie [Schwartz] knew that I liked Black Orchid, so he said, "All right, we'll use her in ***SUPER FRIENDS.***" And of course, I've got a theory of her origin, but there wasn't room to do it there, and Joe [Orlando] doesn't want to reveal her origin yet. I think he would go along with my idea about it, if he wanted to give her an origin, but he still thinks she should be a very mysterious character. The one thing I did want to do was once and for all get rid of the idea many fans have had, that her origin somehow had something to do with Superman.. Even though her powers seem very much like his, I wanted her absolutely to be her own woman—not a Kryptonian, but a completely distinct character.

O'CONNELL: Well, I guess that explodes the theory that she's someone from Earth who was exposed to X-Kryptonite, like Streaky the Super-Cat.

(A short discussion about Streaky follows.)

"...I FELT THAT SINCE THIS IS THE ORIGINAL LEGEND, LET'S STICK WITH IT."
I JUST REALIZED--WITHOUT HER BRACELETS, WONDER WOMAN WILL HAVE NO RESTRAINTS! SHE COULD RUN WILD AT ANY MOMENT!
THERE'S A MORE PRESSING PROBLEM--AQUAMAN'S HYDRO-PHOBIA!
©1981 DC Comics

BRIDWELL:... And I'll admit to having done "fannish" things, occasionally, with my writing—particularly the ***"Greenback"*** story in ***SUPER FRIENDS #5***, in which we had Superman meeting the secret identity of Funnyman. It was the two Siegel and Schuster creations actually meeting. And we caught a glimpse of Linda Turner, The Black Cat, and we found Bruce Wayne in a one-upmanship thing with Tony Stark...

O'CONNELL: That brings up another interesting point. I've been told that you're the only person who thinks that all the DC and Marvel characters exist in the same universe.

BRIDWELL: Well, we'd have a Hell of a time explaining those crossover stories otherwise. I'm talking about things like the Superman/Spider-Man books. There is no explanation of parallel worlds or anything. They're on the same world, and it works beautifully. I read the plot for the Superman/Spider-Man, which also includes Wonder Woman and The Hulk, plus Doctor Doom and The Parasite as villains. You might guess that The Parasite would be in there with [Jim] Shooter working on it, since he created The Parasite. But I think it'll be terrific. Of course, over the years, there have been all sorts of things from the time Batman and Robin fought an international group called Hydra—this was back in 1964—to the time Robin suggested to someone who was offering him a job as a photographer get in touch with a guy named Peter Parker. Then of course there were the Rutland stories that tied together. With The Justice League, Thor, and The Beast, I think.

[This reference is to JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA #103, THOR #207, and AMAZING ADVENTURES #16, which feature an interlocking story. The setting, the Rutland Vermont Hallowe'en Parade, is featured as three super-villains wreak havoc at the celebration. The party is attended by Garry Conway, Len Wein (with wife Glynis), and Steve Englehart—the writers of the three strips.]

One thing; if you looked at the ***THOR*** story, you found that you didn't know who stole the car at the end unless you read the ***JUSTICE LEAGUE*** story in which you found out it was Felix Faust. If you put it all together, you'd have found that really, the villains had to be working together, but they couldn't say so in the books. That's my theory. We can't show as many of the team-ups between the characters as actually happened because of copyright restrictions.

O'CONNELL: It does seem kind of implausible that all these villains show up and want to fight the mightiest hero on Earth, and if they're in a Marvel book, they never mention the existence of Superman—who would certainly be a likely contender for that type of...

ALL RIGHT, YOU KIDS! GET CRACKING WITH THOSE BOOKS IF YOU KNOW WHAT'S GOOD FOR YOU!
WHAT A WONDERFUL REASON FOR COMING OUT OF RETIREMENT!
WE COULD DEVOTE ALL OUR TIME TO TRAINING THE SUPER-HEROES OF TOMORROW!
OH-OH! SOMETHING TELLS ME THE PICNIC IS OVER!
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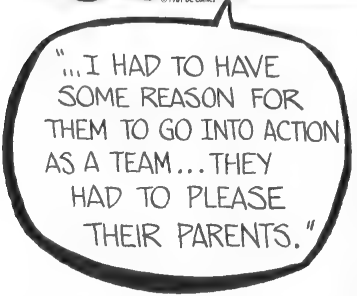


BRIDWELL: True, true, but if they ever had fought him, we couldn't tell it, because they own copyright to the villain. They couldn't tell it because we own copyright to the hero. Therefore, I hold that there probably have been such meetings, and they just couldn't be [printed]. This is assuming we're on Earth-Prime and there are these parallel Earths. Also, I have a theory that one of the things that made Peter Parker come up with a costume like [Spider-Man's] was because of the stories that his Uncle Ben's brother, Doug (his Uncle Doug) had told him. Douglas Parker, of course, the...

O'CONNELL: Yeah, Chief Parker of Smallville.

A lot of people who will be reading this interview in ***COMICS FEATURE*** are probably hearing about some of the interesting things you've been doing, especially in ***SUPER FRIENDS,*** for the first time, since most fans automatically look down their noses at any book that obviously puts such a high priority on being read and understood by younger children—or even by people who aren't dyed-in-the-wool fans. What do you think about this, and do you think that this is motivated more by the fact that fans try to get away from the old image of comics just as "kid's stuff?"

BRIDWELL: That could be. Yet some of the pros, and some of those who are among the best writers, keep telling me that my ***SUPER FRIENDS*** material is among their very favorite. I think that if more people would read it, they might be pleasantly surprised at what they'd find. I have gone to great lengths to try to make it a particularly good comic book. I decided from the very first that since I've got a chance to do something with some of my favorite characters, why should I down-grade them? Why not do them right? And I've striven to do that throughout the series. I've put a little whimsy in there, from time to time, sure. That was always the case in most comics when I was a kid. There was always a comic side-kick in those days: Doiby Dickles, Etta Candy, Alfred began as one. But the best of them were never so completely comic that they lost their reality. I think that what killed The Spectre's strip originally was Percival Popp, the super cop. He was nothing but a jerk, whereas Doiby Dickles talked funny, wasn't as bright as some people, but he was courageous, and a faithful friend of Green Lantern's, which worked fine. Etta Candy—sure, she ate too much, sure, she looked funny and sometimes talked funny. She was also one heck of a fighter—one of the earliest feminists in comics—and had a brilliant mind. She was quite a linguist, and it was indicated that when she finally graduated, she's probably become a college professor. Alfred, of course, went easily from the humorous Alfred of the early stories to the very serious Alfred of the later stories—without any basic change in the character. Whimsy, a little whimsy, is good for a comic book—just as long as you don't overdo it.

O'CONNELL: So humor is one of the principal things you emphasize, especially in ***SUPER FRIENDS?***

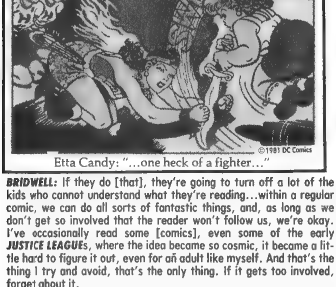
BRIDWELL: Yeah, I don't think of that as basically humorous, but it's a book you can work a little humor into. For example, when we had the story of the villain trying to turn Gleek [the junior Super Friends' alien pet] into a pickpocket for him, and ultimately a burglar, I couldn't resist the end where Gleek was expecting their commendation for having picked the Super Friends' pockets (including Batman's and Robin's utility belts). It works as a nice little gag at the end of the story. I feel that generally the best place to do your gag is at the end of the story. You'll remember many stories, I'm sure, that had that little wink from Clark Kent [at the end], and I think that has been one of the best things around. People have said, "Well, Captain Marvel, as opposed to Superman, always had humor." Superman always had humor. It was in a little different amount, perhaps, and differently done because it was done by different people, but you'd be surprised how many people have done both of them.

It works. You've got to have the drama, yes, you've got to have the action, absolutely, but you also need the humor.

O'CONNELL: What I was trying to get at before was if there is any particular way you approach a book like ***SUPER FRIENDS*** differently than you would a book that has a more "adult"—in quotation marks—image?

BRIDWELL: Not specifically, because I think if there is perhaps some simplicity in there, there should be as much simplicity in most books. For the simple reason that I like to appeal to a wide range of readers, they [the stories] have to be simple to a degree, but not so simple that you're going to turn off the older reader. I feel that perhaps there are some who think that the best thing to do is to write for the college students and forget about the others...

O'CONNELL: Let them struggle along as best they can...



Etta Candy: "...one heck of a fighter..."

BRIDWELL: If they do [that], they're going to turn off a lot of the kids who cannot understand what they're reading...within a regular comic, we can do all sorts of fantastic things, and, as long as we don't get so involved that the reader won't follow us, we're okay. I've occasionally read some [comics], even some of the early ***JUSTICE LEAGUE***s, where the idea became so cosmic, it became a little hard to figure it out, even for an adult like myself. And that's the thing I try and avoid, that's the only thing. If it gets too involved, forget about it.

Otherwise, we have universes we can do. I think, generally, that the younger kids are more sophisticated [now]. They hear more about the scientific things that are happening. I've had Mort Weisinger say, "Oh, don't worry. We won't have to make this thing exactly right because the kids won't know any different." And, inevitably, grade-school kids who are studying that "thing" in their classes at the time told us it was wrong. So you've got to realize that yes, we can do a lot of things, and we don't have to be overly simple—and still we've got places to go that have never been trod before. I'm sometimes amazed myself at some of the ideas we come up with, simply because there are so many and varied ideas. There's so much you can do with a comic.

O'CONNELL: Okay, that makes a good closing line, I think. ●

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the marvel family

THE SUPER-TEAM SPIRIT

and the fawcett heroes

In our last exciting episode, we followed the development of the Marvel Comics (Timely) super-hero teams of the World War II era, some of which (***YOUNG ALLIES, ALL-WINNERS SQUAD***) were published in comics of that period and others of which (***INVADERS, "Liberty Legion,"*** *et al*) were released thirty years later. This issue, before getting to the DC teams, we will concentrate on the few other teams of the 1940s, those which were published by, or originated in comics published by companies other that today's "big two."

When fans talk of the "big two" today, they mean, of course, DC and Marvel, but during the 1940s, Timely (as Marvel was then known) was #3, at best, in the race for comics supremacy. Granted, they had three of the most popular characters of the day in Captain America, Sub-Mariner, and the Human Torch, but there was one other company which had a single character who eclipsed all three of the Timely stalwarts, a character who at one time outsold Superman himself. That hero was the original Captain Marvel, and his publisher was Fawcett.

So powerful was "The Big Red Cheese," as he was affectionately known, that he had little need to team up with his fellow heroes to get the job done, and as a result, super-teams were never a staple of the Fawcett line. We will deal, however briefly, with the four teams which nevertheless sprang from the initial conception of Captain Marvel over the years.

1. ORIGINS OF THE FAWCETT CHARACTERS

Comics fans learned thirty-five years after the fact that the Justice Society of America first united to stop an attempted Axis invasion of Great Britain in 1940 (in ***DC SPECIAL #29***). And a similar amount of time elapsed before fans found out about the birth of The Invaders on a 1941 mission to safeguard Prime Minister Winston Churchill. Naturally, in real-world terms, both of these heroic groups were formed by their writers (and/or editors) to reap the sales which would come from teaming their most popular characters under a single masthead. The first Fawcett super-teams, however, came from far humbler beginnings, and yet were as inevitable a development as the passage from night to day.

To fully understand how one character sparked an entire dynasty of super-heroics, as no other character has except for Superman, it is necessary to go back to those aforementioned inauspicious beginnings.

Once upon a time, there was a subway tunnel...

That's right, a subway tunnel. One dark night in the Winter of 1939-40, a lowly newsboy named Billy Batson hawked his wares on a street corner, when a dark figure (somewhat resembling The Shadow) approached him. The youngster was led into the aforementioned tunnel, rode on a mysterious train, and entered a cavern whose walls were decorated with weird effigies of the Seven Deadly Enemies of Man (actually the Seven Deadly Sins of Judeo-Christian lore). There he met an ancient Egyptian wizard who bade the boy pronounce his sorcerous-sounding name.

"Shazam!" cried Billy for the historic first time, and vanished—to be replaced by the muscular adult costumed hero who would be thereafter known as Captain Marvel. His basic powers were akin to those of Superman (so akin that the two characters' parent companies would engage in a lengthy and historic legal battle on that account), including great strength, speed, and imperviousness to harm. As the old wizard explained it, before he passed on and became a disembodied spirit entity, Cap's powers were derived from the six letters of the magic transformation word which was his mentor's name: *S* for the wisdom

The Shazam (*nee* Marvel) Family

©1981 DC Comics

AND SO, WHEN BILLY BATSON HAS SAID THE MAGIC WORD, HIS BODY FILLS WITH A HEROIC MEN-CLAP ENERGY...
BECAUSE THE WORLD'S MIGHTIEST MORTALS HAD BEEN THE ONES WHO PROVED OR WAS PROMISED TO THE SON OF MARS AND HERCULES BROUGHT DOWN THE MAGIC LIGHTNING...
WHY, IT'S--THE CAPTAIN MARVEL!
I'M ALL WELL AGAIN! I'M STRONG! I'M LIKE YOU!
AND FOR THE FIRST TIME, A MORTAL IS APPOINTED...
THAT'S RIGHT! YOU'RE CAPTAIN MARVEL, JUNIOR!
©1981 DC Comics Group

A dramatic moment in the origin sequence of Captain Marvel Junior (recounted in *SHAZAM #34*).

of Solomon, **H** for the strength of Hercules, **A** for the stamina of Atlas, **Z** for the power of Zeus, another **A** for the courage of Achilles, and **M** for the speed of Mercury. With such mythical-godly derivations, Captain Marvel's abilities would seem to be more closely related to those of Wonder Woman than those of Superman, but the fact that the Big Red Cheese and the Big Red "S" were both male characters seemed to have decided the course of the legal action. (It should be noted that Billy Batson's alter ego did **not** possess the various esoteric attributes of Clark Kent's secret self, such as super-vision, super-hearing, and the ability to be knocked silly by a green mineral called Kryptonite.)

The great appeal of Captain Marvel, naturally enough, was the ease with which young Billy was able to change into his other identity in time of trouble. Whereas Superman, Batman, and the others had to find a phone-booth or a Batcave or whatever in which to change their clothes (and imagine their embarassment if they were caught in the act—indecent Southern exposure, as Yosemite Sam would say), Billy merely spoke his magic word and was replaced by Captain Marvel in a flash of lightning and a rumble of thunder. There was little danger of having his secret discovered, either, as the change was instantaneous and only an eye-witness to the entire ritual could learn the truth (as arch-foe Dr. Sivana did in a very early story, to Billy's future consternation). Also, whereas Superman had had to come from another planet in order to gain super-powers, and while Batman had had to train for long years in order to master his athletic prowess and crime-fighting techniques, Captain Marvel just said his word and went off to work. He wasn't even an adult in "real life", but a little kid—albeit a little kid who swiftly rose from newsboy status to that of radio broadcaster for a major network. The idea was that **anyone** could be Captain Marvel if they could find the right magic word—and that was where the teams started.

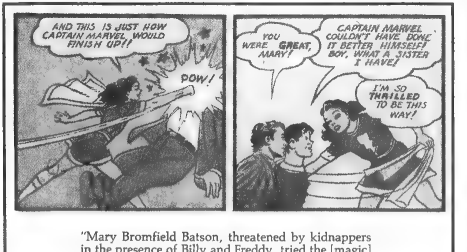
Captain Marvel had premiered in the first (labelled second due to the existence of a "trial" copy that was never published) issue of ***WHIZ COMICS***. By the 21st issue, three other Billy Batsons, relatives of the original, turned up; Tall Billy, Fat Billy, and Hill Billy. And when they said the magic word simultaneously with the original Billy, they were transformed into the Three Lieutenants Marvel, also known as the Squadron of Justice (consisting of a tall Cap, a fat Cap, and a hillbilly Cap). Like many other Golden Age organizations, the Squadron never really caught on and made very few appearances. Actually, the idea behind them undermined the initial appeal of the original character. If anyone could say a magic word and become a super-hero, great! If you had to be named Billy Batson and say the word at the same time as **the** Billy Batson, what was the use?

The true progeny of the Marvel legend got its start four issues later in ***WHIZ #25***. Cap already had his evil opposite number, an Axis agent called Captain Nazi (who possessed super-strength and, later, the power of flight). When a second poor newsboy, one Freddy Freeman, was mortally injured by the Nazi evil-doer, Captain Marvel took it upon himself to save the boy's life. To that end, Cap again entered the secret subway tunnel and summoned the ghost of old Shazam, who enjoined him to share a portion of his powers with the injured lad. Awakening, Freddy called out the name of his hero, Captain Marvel, and he was transformed into a blue-suited teenage version of Cap (although he retained his own facial features), and Captain Marvel Junior was born.

Freddy remained a cripple, walking with a crutch, and (unlike Billy) also remained a newsboy. As Captain Marvel Jr., though, he immediately winged his way over to ***MASTER COMICS*** where he supplanted Bulletman as the lead feature and proceeded to get even with Captain Nazi (as well as tackling other villains, both war-born and domestic).

Cap and Junior teamed up on a few occasions, but the group aspect only became apparent with the introduction of the third Shazam-powered champion. If Billy's namesakes could gain powers by shouting the magic word, then so could his long-lost twin sister, who was discovered in ***CAPTAIN MARVEL ADVENTURES #18***. Mary Bromfield Batson, threatened by kidnappers in the presence of Billy and Freddy, tried the word out herself and became Mary Marvel. Like Freddy, she remained a youngster in both identities, but like Cap, Senior, her costume was red, not blue.

Inevitably, each of the three characters received his/her own magazine, as well as a second title in which he/she was the lead feature, backed by the other Fawcett characters, much as Superman headlines in ***ACTION COMICS*** and Batman stars in ***DETECTIVE COMICS*** to this day. Cap, Senior, had ***WHIZ***, of course, Junior appeared in ***MASTER COMICS***,


AND THIS IS JUST HOW CAPTAIN MARVEL WOULD FINISH UP!!
POW!
YOU WERE GREAT, MARY!
CAPTAIN MARVEL COULDN'T HAVE DONE IT BETTER HIMSELF BOY, WHAT A SISTER I HAVE!
I'M SO THRILLED TO BE THIS WAY!

"Mary Bromfield Batson, threatened by kidnappers in the presence of Billy and Freddy, tried the [magic] word out herself and became Mary Marvel. Like Freddy, she remained a youngster in both identities..." This first glimpse of Mary's alter ego from *CAPTAIN MARVEL ADVENTURES #18*.

and Mary took over from Mister Scarlet in ***WOW COMICS.*** Just as inevitably, it was decided to devote a new title to all three characters, working both in tandem and in separate, often-related adventures. That comic was ***THE MARVEL FAMILY,*** and both the book and the group sported that name. In the "real world", it was the editors' idea; in the world of the Marvels themselves, the concept was the brainchild of the fourth Marvel and business representative for the group's charitable activities, Uncle Marvel. Uncle Marvel was a W.C. Fields-type con artist (in his secret identity Mary's Uncle Dudley, who claimed (falsely, and everyone knew it) to possess the same magic powers as the other Marvels). He christened the charity work-arm of the Marvel Family organization "Shazam, Inc.", never realizing that of the four members, only he and Freddy could pronounce the name without causing themselves to change identities. When he did have recourse to use his "powers" and they, of course, failed to operate, the elderly Dudley blamed the trouble on his recurring "Shazambago." In separate adventures and as a team in individual chapters in the style of the JSA in ***ALL-STAR,*** the Marvel Family fought their way through a total of 89 issues together, to say nothing of their lengthy runs in their individual characters' books and series.

As mentioned in the first article of this series, a second Fawcett team was attempted over in the pages of Junior's stomping grounds, ***MASTER COMICS.*** After a false start with a character who shared the name of the magazine, Master Man (who was apparently even a more blatant Superman rip-off than most), ***MASTER COMICS*** had begun featuring Bulletman as its lead strip, and he had quickly taken on a female counterpart, Bulletgirl. One of the back-up strips in the books was Minute Man, a patriotically-garbed crusader. With issue #21, Captain Marvel Jr., fresh from his origin in ***WHIZ,*** pursued Captain Nazi into Bulletman's strip (which the two heroes shared for those couple of issues) until Junior finally took over the lead spot in #23, relegating Bulletman to a secondary position in the process. The group comes about in ***MASTER #41,*** in which Captain Marvel Jr., Bulletman, and Bulletgirl all appear as guests in Minute Man's strip, and the four become known as the Crime Crusader's Club. The ***OVERSTREET COMIC BOOK PRICE GUIDE*** lists that comic as "the only team in Fawcett Comics", apparently not considering the Marvel Family a team. To return to our definitions of last issue, the Marvel Family are Fawcett's only "common origin" team, having all received their powers from the same source—namely the old wizard. (They could also be considered a "hybrid" team, as each character had a separate origin story.) The

AND FINALLY, IBIS THE INVINCIBLE — THE RESURRECTED EGYPTIAN PRINCE WHOSE MAGICAL SCEPTRE, THE IBISTICK, RANKS AMONG THE MOST POWERFUL WEAPONS OF THREE WORLDS!
IBISTICK! STRIKE DOWN MR. ATOM!
© 1981 DC Comics

Crime Crusader's Club was, however, Fawcett's sole "formulated" team, composed of different characters from separate strips. The experiment was a one-shot, however, and never repeated, and the CCC faded after a single appearance. The Fawcett heroes were out of the "formulated" super-team busines and so they remained for some thirty years.

The final issue of ***THE MARVEL FAMILY*** had a cover story entitled ***"And Then There Were None"***, which turned out to be very appropriate. Fawcett settled the long-running lawsuit with DC out of court, and went out of the costumed crusaders comics business, content to publish only the misadventures of Dennis the Menace during the next few decades. The mighty Marvels, however, would not die! Fans kept them alive in memory over the years, in books like Jules Feiffer's ***THE GREAT COMIC BOOK HEROES,*** and fanzines like Jerry Bails' and Roy Thomas' ***ALTER EGO.*** Eventually, in late 1972, DC Comics, who had the sole rights to the once-Fawcett characters, brought back the Captain and his cronies in a title called ***SHAZAM.*** (They thus avoided confusion with Marvel Comics, who owned the rights to the name "Captain Marvel", although they applied it to a different hero.) ***SHAZAM #1*** revealed that, like Marvel's Captain America, the hero who exclaimed "Holy Moley!" and his cast of supporting characters had been accidentally hurled into suspended animation for two decades, but they were revived. The revival never gained the head of steam which the characters' original incarnations had built up in the Golden Age, but it did eventually lead to the creation of a full-scale "formulated" team of all the major Fawcett heroes—at least for the duration of one very long story.

Just as the DC heroes of the 1960s-present were said to exist on the parallel world of Earth-One (while the JSA counterparts of the 1940s inhabited Earth-Two), so the Fawcett heroes were relegated to yet another separate world, Earth-S ("S" for Shazam, of course). In ***JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA #135-7,*** the heroes of the Fawcett world invaded the annual team-up of the JLA and the JSA, and formed the Shazam Squadron of Justice (not to be confused with the team of the three Lieutenants Marvel three decades earlier). Members included: Mr. Scarlet and Pinky, a Batman-and-Robin-like duo whom Mary Marvel had supplanted in ***WOW;*** Bulletman and Bulletgirl from the earlier CCC; Ibis the Invincible, with his magic Ibistick; and Spy Smasher, another war veteran of ***WHIZ*** fame, whose claim to fame was his modified fighting plane. At the conclusion of the adventure, the Marvel Family, incapacitated in the earlier installments by the villains, joined forces with the other heroes as a team-within-the-new-team. Thus, just as Marvel Comics continued the wartime exploits of its Invaders in the 1970s, and DC revived its Justice Society long after their own title was no more, so did the Fawcett heroes live again, in action together for the first time, as it were.

II. A PROLIFERATION OF QUALITY

Also in the running among the myriad companies that entered the comics sweepstakes of the 1940s was a group called Quality Comics. While their heroes for the most part did not enjoy the high sales of the aforementioned groups, they did boost some of the best comics art of the time, and they published some of the most memorable characters. When Quality finally threw in the towel in the 1950s, it was DC Comics who bought from them some of their better features, and who eventually gained the rights to revive even more of their top super-heroes—much as they had done with Fawcett's stars. ***BLACKHAWK*** continued as a DC title in an unbroken string when Quality died, and the Plastic Man character has undergone several revival attempts over the years. The remaining characters, however, were brought back in the 1970s to form the only "Quality" super-team, years after the initial adventures: The Freedom Fighters.

In ***JUSTICE LEAGUE #107-8,*** the members of the two groups found themselves on still another in the endless series of parallel worlds, this time Earth-X, on which the Nazis had won World War II and the few remaining super-powered heroes formed an underground resistance movement. The Plastic Man and the Blackhawks of Earth-X had perished (though their Earth-One counterparts lived on), and the six survivors who constituted the Freedom Fighters were the former stars of Quality's other comics. Doll Man, a tiny hero like the JLA's Atom, hailed from ***FEATURE COMICS*** and from his own title; the mysterious Phantom Lady had started in a back-up in ***POLICE COMICS*** and later gained a book of her own; the somewhat humorous Human Bomb had the power to cause explosions with his hands and had also been a denizen of ***POLICE COMICS;*** the high-flying Black Condor had made his

home in ***CRACK COMICS;*** while the Ray, who had light-related powers, was a former inhabitant of ***SMASH COMICS.*** The final member, and leader of the group, had begun in ***NATIONAL COMICS*** (a Quality title, not the former company name of DC) and had enjoyed eight issues on his own before his numbering sequence was given to Blackhawk; he was no secret-identity crusader, but the living embodiment of the American Dream—Uncle Sam!

After the two Justice groups had helped rid Earth-X of its Nazi oppressors, the Freedom Fighters decided to return the favor and journey to Earth-One to fight crime. Through a misunderstanding, they became fugitives from justice, and thus they battled their way through fifteen issues of their own joint title before being cancelled. In the transition between worlds, some of their powers were also transformed. Uncle Same still had his unbeatable ,super-strength, but Doll Man picked up a touch of psycho-kinesis gained the dematerializing talent of her ***LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES*** "cousin," Phantom Girl (as well as a somewhat flirtatious nature); the Human Bomb found himself permanently imprisoned in his diving-suit-like costume lest he explode uncontrollably; and the similar differences and difficulties befell the Condor and the Ray. Along the way, the group came up against another super-team called the Crusaders, who were lookalikes of the Invaders (as detailed in this column last issue). These included Americommando and Rusty, Fireball and Sparky, and Barracuda. Also, before the end came, the group picked up a new member in the person of the Firebrand, who had preceded Plastic Man as the lead feature in ***POLICE COMICS.***

PRESENTING—A MILESTONE IN THE ALREADY-AMAZING ADVENTURES OF THE
JUSTICE
AMERICA
—FEATURING—THE LONG-AWAITED RETURN OF SOLOMON GRUNDY! THE GOLDEN AGE'S MOST EXCITING HERO! UNCLE SAM...THE ANTI-COSMIC MAN...THE BLACK CONDOR...THE HUMAN BOMB...AND THE PHANTOM LADY!
PLUS—THE ANNUAL VISIT OF THE JUSTICE SOCIETY OF AMERICA!
COME AND BE WITNESS AT A BAKER'S DOZEN OF EARTHS' GREATEST HEROES BATTLE TO SAVE THE SOUL OF A NATION—AND THE FUTURE OF A WORLD...
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III. ORGANIZATION

As mentioned earlier, the really organized super-teams of the 1940s had a penchant for imitating what was perhaps historical fantasy's first such team, King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table. Ensconced in their secret (or often not-so-secret) headquarters, they would gather about a circular table, or as

SHEESH! I'LL BE GLAD WHEN WE'RE HERE AND ALREADY WE'RE IN ACT ONE!
YOU BANGSANG COMPLAINING, DON'T YOU?
KNOWING THAT HUMAN BOMB, UNCLE SAM'S GOT TO SAY SOMETHING!
©1981 DC Comics

the membership of some groups grew larger, a long dining-room affair. The Marvel Family, once they got down to the idea of regular meetings, usually held in the studios of Billy's employer, radio station WHIZ, even devoted an entire story (***MARVEL FAMILY #8,*** I believe) to the acquisition of a meeting table. The short-lived Crime Crusaders also had one, along with (if memory serves) a clubhouse of sorts. The Shazam Squadron only joined forces in one story, so we'll never know if they came to share the Marvel Family's meeting place (with a larger table, naturally). With the Freedom Fighters, however, it was back to the talking-on-the-run that typified the Invaders. Fugitives from the law, it seems, could never find a headquarters that was quite secret enough.

With each of its members roughly equal to Superman in power (or Superboy and Supergirl, if one prefers), the Marvel Family had no need of special vehicles or gadgets. When danger threatened, they simply picked up Uncle Dudley and off they flew. Similarly, though their one meeting never showed it, had the CCC been called into action, someone would have had to grab up the groud-bound Minute Man and they would all have taken to the air. The Shazam Squadron, on the other hand, would seem more like the Justice League coming over the horizon to the rescue, with flying figures surrounded by a profusion of specially-adapted cars and planes. The FFers, as they were called to avoid confusion with Marvel's more famous FF, also lacked a group vehicle, being content to (or at least forced to) fly, run, and leap into action under their own power.

The non-Marvel, non-DC super-teams have one element in common today: none of them are being published any longer in their own titles. All is not lost, however. Captain Marvel and his cohorts continue to appear in the abbreviated "***Shazam***" strip in ***WORLD'S FINEST COMICS,*** and if Roy Thomas manages to generate sufficient interest in such a project, perhaps we could see the Marvel Family promoted to full-book status once again. In any case, while a Shazam showcase exists, there is always the chance of the other Squadron members turning up therein as guest-stars. Even the CCC is a remote possibility for revival, since Minute Man, the lone member not represented in the larger Squadron, has also survived (as seen in ***SHAZAM #31***). As for the Freedom Fighters, they too are merely waiting in the wings to be represented. DC recently revived the Teen Titans' feature for the second time—can more hero-teams be far behind? ●

IV. MEMBERSHIP

As established last issue, here's our group-roster look at the various teams discussed in this installment, for future reference. Again, all groups members are presumed to have joined their respective teams as charter members in the group's first collective appearance, unless otherwise stated. Heroes' real names, if not given, are unknown. And "see also" references may pertain to other rosters in other articles of this series.

THE CRIME CRUSADER'S CLUB
Founded: ***MASTER #41***
1. CAPTAIN MARVEL JUNIOR (Freddy Freeman)
see also ***MARVEL FAMILY, SHAZAM'S SQUADRON OF JUSTICE***
2. BULLETMAN (Jim Barr)
see also ***SHAZAM'S SQUADRON OF JUSTICE***
4. BULLETGIRL (Susan Kent)
see also ***SHAZAM'S SQUADRON OF JUSTICE***
4. MINUTE MAN (Jack Weston)

THE FREEDOM FIGHTERS
Founded: ***JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA #107***
1. UNCLE SAM
2. DOLL MAN
2. DOLL MAN (Darrell Dane)
3. THE RAY (Happy Terrill)
4. THE PHANTOM LADY (Sandra Knight)
5. THE BLACK CONDOR (Thomas Wright, see Richard Grey, Jr.)
6. THE HUMAN BOMB (Roy Lincoln)
7. THE FIREBRAND (Rod Reilly)
Joins: ***FREEDOM FIGHTERS #12***

THE MARVEL FAMILY
Founded: ***MARVEL FAMILY #1***
1. CAPTAIN MARVEL (Billy Batson)
see also ***SHAZAM'S SQUADRON OF JUSTICE***
2. CAPTAIN MARVEL JUNIOR (Freddy Freeman)
see also ***CRIME CRUSADER'S CLUB, SHAZAM'S SQUADRON OF JUSTICE***
3. MARY MARVEL (Mary Bromfield Batson)
see also ***SHAZAM'S SQUADRON OF JUSTICE***
4. UNCLE MARVEL (Uncle Dudley Batson)

(Note: "Unofficial" members of The Marvel Family included The Three Lieutenants Marvel, "Freckles" Marvel—a young girlfriend of Mary Marvel, and Hoppy the Marvel Bunny—the group's funny animal adjunct.)

THE CRUSADERS
Founded: ***FREEDOM FIGHTERS #8***
1. AMERICOMMANDO
2. RUSTY
3. FIREBALL
4. SPARKY
5. BARRACUDA

SHAZAM'S SQUADRON OF JUSTICE
Founded: ***JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA #135***
1. BULLETGIRL (Susan Kent Barr)
see also ***CRIME CRUSADER'S CLUB***
2. BULLETMAN (Jim Barr)
see also ***CRIME CRUSADER'S CLUB***
3. IBIS (Amentep)
4. MISTER SCARLET (Brian Butler)
5. PINKY ("Pinky" Butler)
6. SPY SMASHER (Alan Armstrong)
7. CAPTAIN MARVEL (Billy Batson)
see also ***MARVEL FAMILY***
8. CAPTAIN MARVEL JUNIOR (Freddy Freeman)
see also ***MARVEL FAMILY, CRIME CRUSADER'S CLUB***
9. MARY MARVEL (Mary Bromfield Batson)
see also ***MARVEL FAMILY***

THE THREE LIEUTENANTS MARVEL
Founded: ***WHIZ #21***
1. TALL MARVEL (Tall Billy Batson)
2. FAT MARVEL (Fat Billy Batson)
3. HILL MARVEL (Hill Billy Marvel)

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Tem Publishing Co., Inc., the subject of this month's column, claims to have published only five comic books, ***CRASH COMICS ADVENTURES*** **#1-4** and ***CRASH COMICS*** **#5.** These scarce comics, issued between May and November of 1940 on an allegedly monthly schedule, are truly fascinating periodicals. They are also extremely significant to the history of the comics on quite a number of different levels. ***CRASH COMICS ADVENTURES*** **#1,** for example, apparently featured the first appearance of the most versatile team to have ever worked in comics, namely that of Joe Simon and Jack Kirby.

Although that debut alone will immortalize the title, and rightly so, it hardly Tem Publishing Co., Inc.'s only claim to fame (or in some cases, notoriety). In fact, Tem's only interesting aspects center around Tem's role in bringing about the end of an era.

The very earliest modern style comic books debuted in 1933 and were very similar to today's comics in physical form. The editorial package, however, was very different. Instead of featuring one major story with possibly a minor back-up tale, such as had been the dominant comic book format since the early 1970s, these very earliest comics (with titles like ***FAMOUS FUNNIES*** and ***FUNNIES ON PARADE***) featured a haphazard collection of Sunday Funnies strip reprints. There were generally only one or two pages from any given strip in any one comic (although a cover feature might have a couple more individual pages scattered among the other strips) and this gave the earliest comics a strange quality. In effect, when one reads these early comics one was not reading a comic book, but rather a very long Sunday Funnies section. Both types of comics can be quite entertaining, but the very earliest type creates an experience similar to viewing a random hodgepodge of uninterrupted cartoon clips, while the more modern comic creates instead an effect similar to that of a cinematic feature.

Major Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson was apparently the first individual to systematically publish modern-type comic books which featured mostly (and sometimes entirely) new material. ***NEW COMICS*** **#1,** dated December 1935, was apparently the first of these titles, with ***MORE FUN*** **#9,** dated March-April 1936, being the second. (The earlier ***MORE FUN*** and ***NEW FUN*** were oversized, and had pulp, not slick, covers.)

The issuance of these new comics clearly shows that the capitalistic Nicholson was trying to improve upon an existing product. His primary innovation was the conception that, if people will pay to read comic books that are collections of things that they have read before, they will likewise pay to read things that they have never read before. To continue our cinematic analogy, the reprint comics were similar to a re-issued movie which, although entertaining, has not lost its element of surprise. Nicholson doubtlessly figured that his original material comics would be more exciting than reprints, and that he could garner a new, larger audience by publishing new and original material.

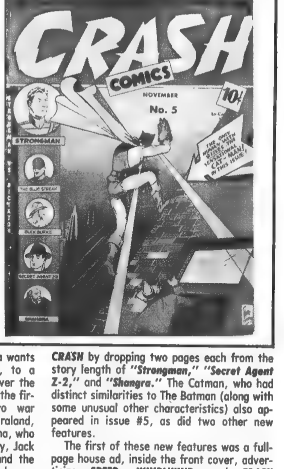
Nicholson's approach was somewhat curious, though, especially when viewed from today's perspective. Instead of commissioning stories of perhaps four to twenty pages in length, as one might expect, Nicholson instead commissioned one-page and two-page features which, while new, gave his comics the illusion of being large Sunday Funnies sections, instead of being new comic books. Since the stories were continued, often without any explanation of what had gone before, they were probably difficult to follow. Readers were required to have prodigious memories in order to recall each of the characters presented in each of perhaps thirty strips, since the creative personnel were only allowed an average of two or three panels per month to establish a character's identity.

Gradually, however, the format became more modern, and features were expanded from one or two pages per issue to four to eight pages within a few years. The generally-available reprint of ***ACTION COMICS*** **#1** from June of 1938 will illustrated to interested readers the strides that the nascent comic companies were making in the middle 1930s. The difference in editorial content between ***NEW COMICS*** **#1** and ***ACTION COMICS*** **#1** seems astounding when one realizes that the entire transition took only two-and-a-half years.

The success of ***ACTION COMICS*** actually set the format for most of the comics that would be produced throughout World War II. There would be one main cover feature, usually a super-hero, which would be placed at either the beginning or the end of the comic. The remainder of the comic would feature a mish-mash of various features.

With regard to this, Tem Publications Co., Inc., apparently made the same decision as publisher Victor Fox. Both must have thought something like "If DC can lead the industry in sales with ***ACTION COMICS,*** I can support myself by issuing a pseudo-***ACTION COMICS.***" Victor Fox, of course, thereupon issued ***WONDER COMICS,*** until a court action from DC forced Fox to drop the main character, a blatant Superman-swipe named Wonderman, after only one appearance. Fox changed the comic's title to ***WONDERWORLD COMICS,*** and Wonderman was forevermore excluded from pulp reality.

—At least until Tem entered the comics game. The first four of Tem's five comics featured upon their front covers a character called "Strongman." Wearing a blue costume with a yellow triangular patch upon his chest, Strongman travelled by leaping and seemed to enjoy flinging cars about and fighting WWII army tanks. Using his identity of Percy Van Norton, playboy, Strongman had a strong



The beginning and the end: *CRASH COMICS ADVENTURES #1* and *CRASH COMICS #5*.

social consciousness and a chest which bullets bounced from. Strongman's similarity to both Superman and Wonderman was marked. Tem was clearly trying to replicate DC's success by copying DC's best-selling character.

Although the author did not have access to ***CRASH COMICS ADVENTURES #2*** while writing this article, it seems that Tem had a remarkably stable list of features in all five issues. The feature contents of #1 and #3 are almost identical, with a couple of features having one or two more pages and a couple having one or two pages less.

What were the remainder of these features? They included two standard types, one involving a trio of flying men (this one actually entitled ***"The Flying Trio"***), while the other portrayed the adventures of a macho big game hunter entitled ***"Buck Burke—He Gets 'Em Alive!"*** Many WWII-era comics ran strips like these, one type reflecting the continued national interest in humankind's ever-improving ability to fly (an impossibility just thirty years before ***CRASH COMICS ADVENTURES #1*** came out), the other type seen as a response to the phenomenal interest created by real-life trapper Frank Buck.

Several other strips in ***CRASH COMICS ADVENTURES*** were also familiar to persons who read pulp fiction in 1940. One was ***"Secret Agent Z-2"*** who tracked down art thieves, defense battery thieves, and even, in #5, a narcotics ring. ***"The Blue Streak—The Defender of the People"*** was described in issue #4 as a "self-appointed foe of ruthless dictators," a type of individual who would become much more common in a year-and-a-half.

"Shangra" was the ruler of a lost world in Tibet (which was ingeniously named Shangraland). Being a two-hundred-year-old magician who is tiring quickly, Shangra wants to marry his only daughter, Lonna, to a suitable spouse so that he can turn over the burdens of office to a younger man. In the fir-first episode, Jack and Joan, two war correspondents, stumble into Shangraland, much to the delight of Shangra and Lonna, who wish for Jack to marry Lonna. Naturally, Jack and Joan have dissenting opinions, and the strip is mostly occupied with the magical wonders and bizarre cultures which Jack and Joan encounter as they attempt to escape.

"Jane Drake, Detective," was the attractive young daughter (apparently around the age of fourteen) who is always getting involved in the legal affairs of her father, a noted attorney. Much to her father's chagrin, Jane and her reluctant companion, Jerry, are consistently solving crimes involving violent criminals whom the adult people in the town are unable to apprehend. Jane's characterization is particularly well-developed, as are those of her father and her companion.

One very unusual strip which ran in ***CRASH*** was ***"Alec and the Reign of Yang."*** It featured the bizarre adventures of a sailor, Alec, and Alec's talented parrot, Tootsie, who are prisoners of war aboard Yang's super-submarine. The strip only ran two or three pages per comic, but given the total lack of redeeming social value which the strip possessed, that was more than ample space. It is difficult (and entertaining) to imagine what the editor was thinking when he or she ran this strip.

The monumental ***"Solar Legion,"*** with Simon & Kirby's first published work, rounded out the first three issues of ***CRASH COMICS ADVENTURES***. A new and very significant character, "The Catman" was developed for #4, and his first six-page tale was squeezed into ***CRASH*** by dropping two pages each from the story length of ***"Strongman," "Secret Agent Z-2,"*** and ***"Shangra."*** The Catman, who had distinct similarities to The Batman (along with some unusual other characteristics) also appeared in issue #5, as did two other new features.

The first of these new features was a full-page house ad, inside the front cover, advertising ***SPEED, WHIRLWIND,*** and ***CRASH COMICS***. The ad was perhaps ill-advised, since it appeared two months after the last issue of ***WHIRLWIND COMICS*** appeared, and in what was destined to be the last issue of ***CRASH COMICS***. The final feature, ***"Bob Preston, Explorer,"*** was a typical explorer strip which was fit into ***CRASH COMICS*** #5 by cropping an additional four pages from the ***"Strongman"*** strip.

Something unexpected must have happened to Tem Publishing Co., Inc., however, shortly after ***CRASH COMICS #5*** appeared. Not only did the house ad in #5 imply that there would be further issues of ***WHIRLWIND*** and ***CRASH,*** which there were not, but most of the stories in #5 carried a blurb advising the reader to look for the next issue of ***CRASH COMICS,*** which one imagines was intended to be placed on sale about a month later, but it never appeared. In fact, no comic has been issued by Tem Publishing Co., Inc., since November of 1940.

This naturally raises a question as to why this is so. If ***CRASH COMICS ADVENTURES*** had been of poor quality, or plodding and dull, one would simply assume that poor sales bankrupted the company. This however, was not the case at all. In truth, the stories that appeared in ***CRASH*** were generally excellent entertainment. They were fast-paced, action-filled, relevant to

contemporary society, and just plain exciting to read. Why, then, did Tem cease to function?

This author believes that what happened was probably the result of a legal suit brought by DC. Once Superman proved that there was big money to be made from publishing comics, two things began to happen. First, other companies, such as Fox and Tem, began to copy the character of Superman. This led, inevitably, to DC re-investing some of their profits into legal services, which led to DC's two most celebrated suits, which involved Fox's Wonderman and Fawcett's Captain Marvel. This author strongly suspect that this litigious attitude of DC's also led to a cease and desist letter of some type addressed from DC to Tem, and that Tem, heedful of the similarities between Strongman and Wonderman, voluntarily ceased publication.

Although this author currently lacks the proof necessary to substantiate this belief, the events which ensued in the comics publishing world after the issuance of ***CRASH COMICS #5*** tend to support this conjecture.

If we assume that Tem Publishing Co., Inc., is just one of a number of names employed by a particular publisher, events begin to fit into a pattern. To begin, we have the pattern of addresses. ***CRASH #1*** was published by Tem, 381 Fourth Avenue, NY NY. ***CRASH #3*** listed Tem's office of publication as 1 Appleton Street, Holyoke, MA, and the editorial office as 381 Fourth, NY NY. ***CRASH #4*** listed Tem's office of publication as Meriden, Conn., with the same editorial address of 381 Fourth, NY NY. ***CRASH #5*** lists the same indicia as #4.

Now, although Tem apparently published nothing during December of 1940, the month after ***CRASH COMICS #5*** appeared, a company called Helnit, which listed the same addresses as Tem, began publishing of a comic entitled ***GREEN HORNET.*** Aside from the obvious relationship inherent in listing the same addresses, thereby indicating that one is the same as the other, the cover of ***GREEN HORNET #1*** is particularly relevant to our thesis. For, the cover of ***GH #1*** clearly states that this comics is legally licensed by the Green Hornet Corporation to Helnit. What better way could there be to show a court one's good faith with regard to copyright infringement than to prominently display, on the cover of one's next publication, one's licensing permission?

Another bit of evidence linking Tem with Helnit is that Helnit began publication of ***CATMAN COMICS*** with issue #6 dated May of 1941. Since there were no issues of ***CATMAN #1-5***, but there were issues of ***CRASH #1-5***, wherein the Catman made his debut in #4, and was the cover feature of #5, it is logical to assume that ***CATMAN #6*** was a continuation of ***Crash.*** In fact, when one realizes that the ostensible publisher's names are different but the publisher's addresses are the same, it becomes illogical to assume anything else.

The demise of Tem Publishing Co., Inc., then, marks the end of an era. In just six short years the comics had evolved from an infant publishing curiosity into a multi-million-dollar enterprise. Whenever an explosive industry is birthed, a certain amount of chaos ensues before basic guidelines are established. Tem Publishing, through their character Strongman, helped to define the legal limits of those guidelines. Tem may have played for the losing side initially, but they did so with style, and they learned from their mistakes, apparently rising from the ashes of their defeat to the success of Helnit, and later Holyoke Publishing.●

A selection of pages from several features in *CRASH COMICS ADVENTURES*. *"Strongman,"* above, and on the right is a page from *"Alec and the Reign of Yang."*

Above, a page from *"Buck Burke."*

FORGOTTEN FAVORITES

"THE SOLAR LEGION"

by Joe Simon and Jack Kirby

"And the day came when the mysterious forces behind man to the earth fell before the onslaught of his science and the dark, airless vacuum that was space yielded to the piercing flames of his countless machines...

"The story of Adam Starr is the saga of the solar legion, an organization yet unfounded, which guards the vast frontiers of an era yet unborn..."

Thus begins the saga of the Solar Legion, which features what appears to be the first work of Simon & Kirby ever printed in a comic book. (The price guide lists ***BLUE BOLT #2*** as the first S&K team-up, but ***BB #2*** is dated two months later than ***CRASH COMICS ADVENTURES #1.***) The figures and faces are unmistakably those of Jack Kirby, whose style had changed little since his first appearance in comics in ***JUMBO COMICS #1.*** The dark, moody inking is as certainly by Joe Simon.

Although the strip is not signed, it is certainly the work of master comics craftsmen. One is immediately impressed by the striking narrative force of what is clearly a cosmic epic. If one assumes, as S&K clearly did with this story, that humankind would inevitably escape the confines of Earth, establishing a new frontier in space, and that this new frontier would have its share of villains, much as the American West had during its frontier days, then one would have the basic working premise for this intensely involving comics feature.

This story, published some twenty-seven years after the Wright Brothers' first flight, and some seventeen years before the launch of Sputnik, successfully attempts to capture the grandeur of space exploration in both words in pictures. Although the writing is a bit crude, and some of the panel artwork looks more like it was intended to be used as episodic pulp magazine illustrations rather than as a sequential narrative, there is nonetheless an unshakable sense of purpose that permeates the strip. Adam Starr is clearly a man possessed by a mythic destiny. His purpose is to fight piracy and tyranny wherever it appears, with perhaps the best episode occurring in ***CRASH COMICS ADVENTURES #3.*** In that issue, Adam Starr discovers that the notorious pirate Black Michael, whom Adam had bombed on Pluto in issue #1, was still alive and well and living on Mars under one of the canals. Black Michael captures Adam, who is seeking the kidnapped Julie Wade, and prepares to feed both Julie and Adam to one of the most magnificent Dragon figures ever concocted anywhere, anytime: the awesome Martian Gansha. Luckily, Adam's Atom Blaster destroys the Gansha (who had taken up residence in the canals, making them unsafe for commerce or travel), as well as Black Michael, thus leaving a grateful and voluptuous Julie Wade (who is eager to "thonk" Adam). This type of high adventure, packed into four or five pages, typifies the strip.

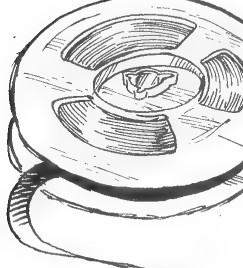
The extraordinary potential of the Solar Legion was the most tragic loss in the fall of Tem Publishing Co., Inc., Apparently never resurrected, this dynamic strip will always rank as one of the great concepts in comics.

At least there is some consolation in knowing that a mere four months after the last appearance of the Solar Legion, S&K were again in print, this time with a new character capable of fulfilling his early promise: Captain America! ●

Our oldest and youngest readers might perhaps know *Murphy Anderson* as either the artist on Fiction House's *"Star Pirate"* series, or as one of the best *"Superman"*-inkers ever. Doubtless, though, most of our readers remember Murphy Anderson's long tenure as one of the primary artists on Julius Schwartz's prestigious line of science fiction adventure titles in the 1950s and 1960s, as the artist of *"The Atomic Knights,"* and *HAWKMAN*, the inker of Infantino's *"Adam Strange,"* and the artist for the later *"John Carter of Mars"* series.

This interview was conducted nearly a decade ago, but never before printed. It was conducted by Paul Kupperberg and Carl Gafford for *ETCETERA*, and transcribed by Lee Ann Layton.

The Anderson Tapes



part one

FEATURE: Murphy, a lot of us grew up on the stories you drew, but most of us know very little about the man who drew them. To start off, how about giving us some background on how you got started, and what sort of training you had in art?

ANDERSON: Well, I had no formal art training, outside of a little art in college. Just like a lot of young fellows today, I loved comic books. I grew up on Will Eisner and Lou Fine! They were my basic gods—Reed Crandall, later. Then I discovered Alex Raymond and Hal Foster. But really, comic books made the biggest impression on me. Well, ***BUCK ROGERS*** was the first big impression. I was simply fascinated by the concept of ***BUCK ROGERS***, and I made a great effort to get an out-of-town newspaper every week just to get Buck. I was about ten or eleven years old at the time, but my interest in comics goes back even farther than that. My mother always likes to say that I started to read by reading comics. She was a school teacher, so she helped me, but before I started school I was reading comics.

FEATURE: You did have some art instruction, though, in college?

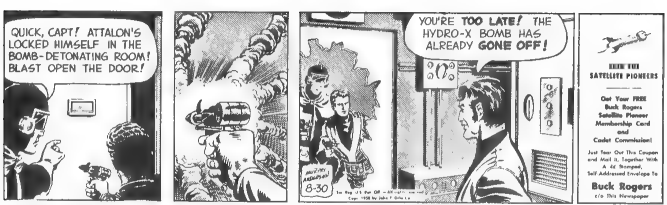
ANDERSON: Yes, some. I started out to be an art major at the University of North Carolina. You see, William Reid Prince was the head of the art department at the time, and Prince was doing a comic strip in those days—a thing called ***ALADDIN JUNIOR***. I don't know if you've ever seen it. ***ALADDIN JUNIOR*** was a Sunday page he did for King Features. It was a whimsical thing about a little boy who had a genie for a friend. They had a magic carpet that flew them around, and of course they got into all kinds of mischief. Anyway, Prince was one of the top commercial artists of the 1920s and 1930s, so I felt like I really had it made, being able to have him as an instructor. Then, two weeks into the semester he took sick, and I just couldn't take his substitute. The guy was constantly needling me because I wanted to draw comics. He thought comics were a great waste of time. He used to draw these big things...about as big as the wall...and you couldn't tell what the devil it was supposed to be. So I dropped out of the class and took trigonometry. In fact, I took trigonometry for the second time! I'd have taken just about anything to get out of class. I just couldn't bear it with Prince gone. I don't know if you have any way of looking up his work, but if you ever run across anything by William Prince, you'll know what I mean. You'd really be amazed by the quality of his work. His pages were just beautiful!

FEATURE: It was then that you first got into comics, wasn't it?

ANDERSON: Yes, I started with Fiction House. And there's a thread that runs all the way back to when I was in High School. I had written some publishers in New York and had gotten some encouragement. Well, I was the co-editor of the school paper, so I was sent to New York along with the editor to attend the Columbia Scholastic Press Convention. And while I was in New York, I called on the people at Quality. There I met Lou Fine, which was a big thrill, and Jack Cole, people like that, and I got enough encouragement so that, after I started college, I kept sending my samples.

The publisher that had inherited the Fox line—you know, ***THE BLUE BEETLE*** and such—encouraged me to the point that he asked me to do some stuff. And, being in school, there just wasn't time to get it done. So I bugged my father. I told him I was going to be drafted, and I wanted a chance to do comic books. He thought it was a terrible idea, but he gave me a hundred dollars and said—this was at the end of my second quarter in college—he said when that [was] gone, that's it! So I came to New York and walked the streets for a week. And on that Friday, I found a job at Fiction House. The funny thing was, I probably wouldn't have gotten that job if it hadn't been for Harry Chesler.

I had called on Jerry Iger, thinking he ***was*** Fiction House. He was so identified with the company, I didn't know there was a separate operation. So naturally, after talking to him, I hadn't bothered to look further at Fiction House. Well, I called on Chesler on that Friday morning, and my hundred dollars was about gone. Chesler looked over my work and he said, "I'm not publishing anything right now. Why don't you go to Fiction House?" I told him I'd already been there, and he asked my who I'd talked to. I told him Jerry Iger. "He's not Fiction House!" he said. "Wait a minute!" And he picked


QUICK, CAPT! ATTALON'S LOCKED HIMSELF IN THE BOMB-DETONATING ROOM! BLAST OPEN THE DOOR!
YOU'RE TOO LATE! THE HYDRO-X BOMB HAS ALREADY GONE OFF!
8-30
JOIN THE SATELLITE PIONEERS
Get Your FREE Buck Rogers Satellite Pioneer Membership Card and Cadet Commission!
Just Tear Out This Coupon and Mail It, Together With A 4¢ Stamped, Self Addressed Envelope To
Buck Rogers
c/o This Newspaper

up the phone and called Jack Fern at Fiction House and gave me such a build-up, I'm sure Fern must have thought he was hiring the new Alex Raymond and Hal Foster rolled into one. Anyway, when I went up there he gave me the job, and the following Monday, they gave me a strip to work on. Who knows what would have happened if I hadn't met Harry Chesler? I probably would have gone home and never gotten into comics at all!

FEATURE: And that marked the start of your career in comics?

ANDERSON: Yeah, I started on a strip called ***"Star Pirate."*** Then I did some filler pages for ***PIONEER COMICS*** and a ***"Captain Wings"*** story. But mostly I was doing ***"Star Pirate"*** so they could fill up a backlog. They knew I was going into the service, and so I worked for five or six months before I left for the Navy.

FEATURE: And what year was that?

ANDERSON: That was 1944. I was seventeen at the time—about seventeen-and-a-half. I was in the Navy for almost a year. They rejected me twice! I tried to get into the Naval Aviation Corps, but I have this bum neck and 3/20 vision. And actually, the Navy was looking for something better than that. The Army, on the other hand, was perfectly satisfied with my vision, but, I volunteered for immediate induction and wound up at Fort Bragg.

Now at Fort Bragg, they separated everyone according to their education: those who had finished grade school, those who had finished high school, and those who had finished college. Then, the Navy took its pick of the guys who had finished college and left the rest for the Army. There were two of us that had gone to college when I went through, and the other man had gone for considerably longer than I had. But since I had volunteered for immediate induction, they decided to take me! And all the while I had ***tried*** to enlist in the Navy and they wouldn't take me! But as they started to stamp my papers "Navy," some sergeant said, "Lieutenant, this man's vision isn't good enough!" The lieutenant looked at my papers and said, "Sergeant, take this man over and check his binocular vision. If he can see 20/20 with one eye, he can see 20/20 with both." So I got past that time.

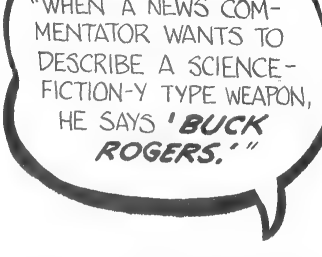
Then I went to Riley to be sworn in, and again they picked up on my vision. So I had to do a selling job on the doctor there. I told him that my vision with both eyes was fine. He just shook his head and said, "All right, I'll let you go, but they're going to send you back!" So I got to Bambridge for my physical, and [as] I'm standing in this line, I notice that they're having every guy read the top line with his right eye and the bottom line backwards with his left. By the time I got up there, I had that bottom line memorized! So I was sworn in.

But after the war was over, everybody wanted out, and they were letting everybody out, but they had this point system. I was going to have to wait six to eight months just killing time until my turn came to get out. So I went around to the hospital and reminded them about my bad eyes, and they let me out.

FEATURE: Sort of having your cake and eating it too!

ANDERSON: Well, I wouldn't have done it, but it was really pointless to stay in. At the time they were demobilizing us.

FEATURE: Then you never went overseas? You stayed in the States all the time?



ANDERSON: I stayed and I worked! As a matter of fact, I worked on the ***BAMBRIDGE MAIN SHEET.*** They wanted to keep me there as staff cartoonist, but I passed what they called the "Eddie Test." You've got to visualize that this was wartime and radar was new. They didn't have people that were trained to maintain the equipment. They were taking anyone that had a good enough score on the Eddie Test and sending them to school. You had no choice if you passed that test and it was mixed in with all the other tests you had to take. So they took me kicking off to Chicago, and of course I failed the training. The theory was fine, but I was all thumbs as far as the shop work and soldering and such was concerned. The other guys would be through with an experiment, and I would hardly be started. So after failing the first month, they called me down and asked me if I wanted to try again. I said, "Not really," and they let me go. I ended up in the Chicago Loop.

I was stationed and actually living in the Loop, working in the visual arts department, and also on the newspaper of the Navy Radio of Chicago school system. One of the schools was on top of the State Lake Building where the WBKB television studios were located. Television was in its infancy. They were broadcasting maybe a few hours a week, and the school was right there in the studio. (It was quite choice duty to be stationed in the Loop and watch all the girls go by!)

Anyhow, at that point I went over and called on Ziff-Davis. They were in the Loop, and I got a couple of assignments to do pulp illustrations. I had done a few pulp illos while I was at Fiction House, But it wasn't long afterward that I got out of the Navy, and I didn't feel like going back to school—I never did get back. I went back to Fiction House in New York for a while, but I had met my future wife in Chicago, so I wound up going back there to free-lance for Fiction

House. And that's when I found the ***BUCK ROGERS*** job.

FEATURE: What year was that?

ANDERSON: 1947. I was hired on ***BUCK ROGERS. BUCK*** was in a steady decline then. They hadn't kept up with the times. The stories were bad. The artwork...well, Dick Calkins was doing as well as ever, but he couldn't stand up to the competition like Raymond and Foster. Strange thing about ***BUCK ROGERS:*** it was released on the same day as ***TARZAN,*** January 6, 1929. Both strips came out and they were the first true adventure strips. I don't know if you ever realized that. Roy Crane had been doing ***WASH TUBBS*** and that was semi-adventure...

FEATURE: The ***CAPTAIN EASY*** stuff...

ANDERSON: Right. Basically, though, it was humorous. It wasn't straight adventure. And ***BUCK ROGERS*** was as big as ***BATMAN*** ever was!

FEATURE: Now, this was the first time you were on the ***BUCK ROGERS*** strip. How long did you draw it?

ANDERSON: Just about two years.

FEATURE: Were you handling the complete art?

ANDERSON: Yes, I was doing the daily strip. I was supposed to do the Sunday, but that never gelled. I had a disagreement with the old man, John Dille. ***BUCK ROGERS*** was his baby—it had been his idea to make a comic strip of the thing—and he was determined ***not*** to spend any of the vast amount of money he had made on ***BUCK*** to upgrade the strip. He wanted to bring it back [to its previous high level of popularity], but he wanted to do it as cheaply as possible. (Laughter.) So ultimately we had a disagreement over the royalties I was supposed to get—and never did get! I started on that strip for $65 a week. Don't ask me why! (Laughter.)

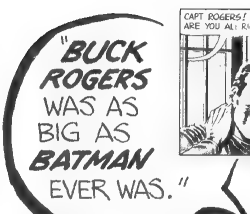
FEATURE: Well, in 1947 it was different...

ANDERSON: Yes, but it still didn't amount to very much! I was making better money doing comic book work.

FEATURE: Was Calkins still doing the Sundays while you were doing the da lies?

"DID YOU KNOW THAT PHIL NOWLAN THE ORIGINATOR [OF BUCK ROGERS] WAS FIRED... FOR GETTING TOO 'FAR OUT' WITH THE STRIP]?"
NOWLAW, BYRON TOLD ME HIS PLAN-
IF WE CHECK THE SPEED OF THIS MOON SHELL A TOSS-THAT'LL LESSEN THE CENTRIFUGAL FORCE THAT BALANCES IT'S ANGULAR AND-
YOU MEAN-THAT THE MOON WILL THEN FALL ON MARS?
©1981 John F Dille Co

An early *BUCK* by Nowlan and Calkins.



ANDERSON: No, he never really drew the Sundays, though he did some of the faces. The Sunday page was ghosted by a guy named Russell Keaton, probably about the best artist ***BUCK ROGERS*** ever had. He also did a strip called ***SKY ROADS.*** Ed Aprill reprinted some of those when he was reprinting the ***BUCK ROGERS*** strips.

But Keaton did the Sundays, and I think it was really the best!

FEATURE: Were any of his strips in the big ***BUCK ROGERS*** hardback?

ANDERSON: No...Did you know that Phil Nowlan, the originator [of ***BUCK ROGERS***], was fired from the strip before he died? He was fired for getting too "far out" with ***BUCK ROGERS!*** Can you imagine that? (Laughter.)

FEATURE: Well, who can believe in such things as going to the moon! Indeed! (Laughter.)

ANDERSON: I remember being so fascinated with ***BUCK ROGERS...*** I bought some of the comic book reprints that came out in the 1930s and early 1940s for the early strips.

FEATURE: You mean the ***FAMOUS FUNNIES?***

ANDERSON: Yeah. Well, actually, the ***FAMOUS FUNNIES*** were collected from the 64-page ***BUCK ROGERS*** comics. A lot of Keaton's work was in there, and a lot of the early stuff by Rick Yeager. Yeager started out as Keaton's assistant on the Sundays. He did some nice stuff in the early 1930s, but then he started to go ***"Dick Tracy."*** Chester Gould was his idea of the greatest cartoonist in the world, and he tried to employ those techniques on ***BUCK ROGERS,*** but it just didn't work. ***BUCK*** wasn't really handled right after the late 1930s.

FEATURE: What about some of the other artists between you and Calkins?

ANDERSON: There were none between me and Calkins on the dailies. I took over directly from him. Then Yeager took over. Keaton never got any credit on the Sundays; Calkins' name always appeared there until Rick's name started showing up. Then, when I left, Yeager took over and did both dailies and Sundays until I took over again in the late 1950s. At that point I did daily and Sunday [strips], and when I left, George Tuska took over. He had been giving me a hand on getting a lead on my deadlines. He made his contact that way and got the job after I left.

FEATURE: How long were you on ***BUCK*** the second time?

ANDERSON: Just less than a year. Just long enough to get my personal life really screwed up! (Laughter.) I had to sell my house and move to take on that strip. They called me to come back and do it. They had this salesman that hadn't been told that you can't sell ***BUCK ROGERS.*** When Sputnik went up, [the salesman] was in Texas, and he sold that strip in every town he called on—all the way back to Chicago. He was new and didn't know that it couldn't be sold. Most of the time the strip had been sold by the old man himself, when he went somewhere on vacation—it was his pet. Of course, it's understandable. If salesmen have a limited amount of time to make their pitches, they'll pitch whatever they think has the best chance of selling. Usually ***BUCK ROGERS*** never entered their minds.

"VERY FEW GUYS HAVE BEEN ABLE TO TAKE A STYLE AND CARRY IT OFF IN THEIR OWN WAY. FRANK ROBBINS IS AN OBVIOUS EXCEPTION."

AH, MY SWEET... WHAT A DELIGHTFUL SURPRISE!
IS IT, TAKE DEAR, YOU HAD A DATE WITH ME... HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN?
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I still feel that if that feature had been handled properly, they could have been as successful as [Milton] Caniff's strips. The market was there. ***BUCK*** was just mishandled. Look at ***SUPERMAN!*** It's lasted down through all the years. They've handled it better. ***BUCK ROGERS*** should've lasted—the name is synonymous with science fiction. When a news commentator or writer wants to describe a science-fiction-y new weapon, he doesn't say "Flash Gordan," he says "Buck Rogers." It's just a shame that the feature died. Today, more than ever, there's an interest in science fiction material.

FEATURE: There's that one science fiction strip that's lasted over the years. It's still being done by Paul Norris, ***BRICK BRADFORD.***

ANDERSON: It's been going on for a long time, and ***FLASH GORDON*** is still running.

FEATURE: But ***FLASH GORDON*** isn't [really still running], not in the classic sense.

ANDERSON: No. As a matter of fact, I was sharing a studio with Dan and Seymour Barry back when Dan got the ***FLASH GORDON*** strip. We got into a lot of discussions about it. Not that I was any big influence on him, but my feeling was that the strip should be handled the way Caniff might handle it—in other words, go strong on characterization and be really up-to-date and modern with any concept, research it. And that's what Dan did. He did a very nice job on that strip in the beginning. Then he started forming it out. He always had nice artwork and wouldn't settle for any junk, but without some real care about the thing, the strip just didn't get the treatment it should have [gotten]. And Mac Raboy, as fine an artist as he was, just wasn't right for the Sunday ***FLASH.*** The style was so tight! The first strip he did was beautiful; it almost looked like Raymond himself had done it. And then it sort of shifted over into his normal style—kind of stiff and overworked. Beautifully done, though. His stuff was so gorgeous!

FEATURE: There was a huge Mac Raboy display at the 1973 New York Comic Convention which used a lot of his ***FLASH GORDONS...***

ANDERSON: Well, don't get me wrong; I'm comparing him to the master, Alex Raymond. That's pretty tough to be compared to someone like that. In his own way, Raboy was a very fine artist, but it's like comparing George Wunder to Milt Caniff. No matter how good a job Wunder could have done [after he took over] on ***TERRY AND THE PIRATES.*** It could never have been better than second-rate Caniff. Very few guys have been able to take a style and carry it off in their own way. Frank Robbins is an obvious exception, but there are very few men like Frank Robbins around.

FEATURE: That's probably why a successor on a strip will try to make a break and do something different.

ANDERSON: Yeah, and I can understand that. But, of course, Wunder was trying to carry on in the Caniff tradition [yet] his stuff somehow never had the spark. There have been some strips like ***SNUFFY SMITH,*** which survived a change in artists. That strip went on to become more successful than it had ever been. But then, we're talking about humor.

FEATURE: Murphy, a great deal of your work is centered around science fiction...

ANDERSON: Well, that my first love, of course. It's the ***BUCK ROGERS*** influence. I discovered pulp magazines after I had been a fan of comics for some time. I hadn't realized that there were such things. Then I was hooked! I started reading ***AMAZING*** and ***ASTOUNDING,*** and haunting old book stores to buy up back issues. I've still got a big collection of the science fiction pulps from the late 1930s and early 1940s.

FEATURE: Were the movies you saw as a kid an influence on your work?

ANDERSON: Oh, yeah! One of my first recollections of the movies, I guess, was a ***"Tarzan"*** movie. I still remember walking into the theater with my dad. Tarzan was letting go of a vine and landing right in the midst of the crooks or something, and I remember that same scene when we got up to leave. That's the only thing I really remember from the whole picture. Later, I saw ***KING KONG , THE INVISIBLE MAN, FRANKENSTEIN...*** those movies really left an impression on me! I've always had a love for that kind of material, both the weird and science fiction, but primarily science fiction.

FEATURE: You used to do a lot of science fiction at National [DC] in the 1950s. How did you get into that?

ANDERSON: Well, that started when I came back to New York after the first ***BUCK ROGERS*** work. I was doing some pulps for Ziff-Davis, even though I'd left Chicago. (I was back home at the time.) I worked for my dad's business for a while, but there was too much of the artist in me. Anyway, the art director at Ziff-Davis became a pretty good friend of mine. He called and told me that they were starting a comic book line in New York, and asked if I'd like to do comic books for them. And I said, "Sure!" Jerry Siegel had been selected as the editor, and in a very short time I got a letter from him with a script. So I was in on their first science fiction comic, ***AMAZING ADVENTURES.*** They patterned several of their books after their pulp line: ***AMAZING ADVENTURES, AMAZING STORIES.*** And in that first issue, I remember, there was art by another guy who was pretty good at science fiction: Wally Wood! (Laughter.)

FEATURE: This was in the early 1950s?

ANDERSON: Yeah. I decided to come back to New York since things seemed to be opening up. Fiction House had sort of been on the skids. I had come back to work for Ziff-Davis primarily, but then the day came when I didn't have a script, and they said they didn't know for sure when they'd have another one for me. It might be a couple of days, or it might be a week. So that day I called on DC, I called on EC, [and] I called on Stan Lee.

Julie [Schwartz] wasn't in that day. I'd never met Julie, but they said, "Come back tomorrow! You've got to meet Julie Schwartz!" So I did come back a few days later, and Julie gave me a script. But that first go-round I had talked to EC, and...oh! And I went to Avon. Avon said they didn't have anything at the moment. EC said, "Well, we'll call you in a couple of weeks." I thought it was a polite brush-off,but eventually they did call me. By that time, however, I was swamped with a bunch of Ziff-Davis stuff and the strips from Julie, so I never took EC up on their offer.

Next Installment;
STRANGE ADVENTURES AT DC;
FROM ADAM STRANGE TO JOHN CARTER OF MARS

GUILTY FANTASIES

by Peter Gillis

Illustration by Howard Shapiro

Character ©1981 DC Comics

I wandered through the Cosmic Amusement Park, as I had recently got into the habit of doing. This time, though, instead of enjoying the attractions I usually frequented (***Attain Godhood! Become Polymorphous-Perverse! Beat Up Your Childhood Bully! Meet the Beatles!***) I decided to look around for something different.

I found it. Just beyond the Lawrence Ferlinghetti roller coaster, along a dimly-lit arcade, I saw a handsomely-lettered sign: ***$25! Have Sex With the Comic-Book Character of Your Choice!***

The proprietor was a seedy-looking character: fat, rumpled, needing a shave. He had an ***INSIDE COMICS*** T-shirt on and wore a straw boater with an ACBA button prominently displayed. I went up to him.

"What a stupid idea!" I said.

"Oh, you'd be surprised how popular this thing is. I make a pretty penny off it." And he showed it to me. He was right: it was extraordinarily beautiful. (This sort of silly interchange went on all the time at the Park. It was sort of like preliminary introductions.) "But I get flocks and flocks of 'em cramming their little bodies in here."

I pondered for a moment. Then I asked in a low voice, "Do you have Lynda Carter?"

He snorted. "I get *that* question all the time. Nope, and not Shelley Duvall, either. Nor Pam Grier."

"Pam Grier?"

"She played Friday Foster. Now, just like it says, comic book characters—not actresses."

"That's what I thought the first time. But why would anybody want to have sex with a cartoon? They're two-dimensional—"

"Now, I take care of that. They're real bodies, but like the way they are in the books. You want to see?"

He led me in behind the curtain of the booth. In the little room, carpeted with bright green indoor-outdoor and cheap wood panelling sat Zatanna (in her top hat and mesh stockings, I was glad to see) and The Valkyrie (in her old black-and-silver nose-cone costume) doing their nails and chatting idly.

"See?"

"What's that heavy black line around them?"

"Residual effect. Wish I could get rid of it. Whaddaya think?"

"It's frightening. These women all have 44-inch busts that defy gravity; and their hips—there's something wrong with them."

"Oh, an elitist, eh? What have you got against boobs, mister?"

"Nothing—but they don't look real! I mean when they're on a four-color page they can

pass, but that's not how women—even well-built women—look!"

I had said this in a deliberately low voice so as not to offend the girls, but Val was looking at me. She shoved Dragonfang back into its scabbard—it had been lying atop a pile of ***COSMOPOLITAN***s—and flashed into street clothes (a halter top and Sergio Valente jeans.) Her conical breasts thrust out like a shelf. Her waist was impossibly small. She strode out of the room like a man.

"Listen, bub," the proprietor whispered to me, "Whaddaya expect? The comic book portrayal of wimmen is a holdover from the old days, you know the days before ***PLAYBOY*** and all of that. Those were the days when ya got off on Vargas girls or those 'spicy' cartoons they useta run in ***ESQUIRE***. Hey, yeah, they bore no relation to the real female body, but it was the best you could get."

"But today you can see real flesh almost everywhere! Why do comic book women *look* like that? I can understand idealizing a woman in a work of fiction, but why be grotesque about it?"

"Don't ask me, pal. All I know is, there's thousands of kids out there crazy, and I mean obsessed with these little numbers."

"Is it kids, then? Kids who aren't allowed ***PLAYBOY***?"

The man squinted. "Naw, that's the screwy part about it! It ain't kids who don't know better; they're older, but I'll admit they're a little strange—"

"Fans?"

He cocked an eyebrow at me. "Naw, network executives! Of course, fans! But don't be patronizing, pal. There's a healthy dose of pros, too. Just like you."

Zatanna got up. Her feet were incredibly tiny. Her swallowtail coat thrust out absurdly. Still, she had a nice face...

"But why would fans choose to be obsessed with a a caricature when they can see pictures of beautiful real women—?"

Zatanna walked again like a man—over to me and pressed her black-outlined body close to mine.

"Come with me, big boy, and maybe I can shed some light on the matter."

There was something in her voice, beyond the Mae West-parody come-on that convinced me I should. We went through a corridor panelled with the same cheap wood, lined with doors that weren't even varnished. Just dirty. We came to a room that, just by its look, I knew to be exactly like a dozen others. Almost unfurnished, there was a framed Brothers Hildebrandt poster above the unmade bed.

We sat down on the bed, side by side, our thighs touching. "I think," Zatanna said after a moment, "that the whole thing is that we're abstract figures. We're '***sexy.***' Do you know that there's no word in any other language equivalent to 'sexy'? It's true: it's a real American psychic fabrication. Not erotic, not that a woman looks like she's a good lover—she has to look like she *doesn't* do it, more often than not—but that she corresponds to an image, a set of proportions. Hence these:" and she touched her jutting bustline. "44-22-33. Do you know how many men can be turned on by reciting those numbers?"

She had knotted her brow. "And with comics it goes further. We're not even in an erotic situation—it's all power bolts and force shields and explosive punches. We are 'sexy' adjuncts to sublimations like that. Oh, sure, we're strong, capable, and courageous, and sometimes even witty and independent-minded, and men—fans—can become interested by that, but what we would ordinarily be about—power—is something that repels them if it becomes too apparent."

"Big Barda and Thundra are perceived as grotesques." I nodded.

"Or they're always trying to turn them

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normal-sized, like Marshall Rogers did to Barda." Zatanna smiled. "Didn't work. She's around here somewhere, and would still top you by about six inches."

"But nobody chooses her," I hazarded a guess.

"Just one grey-haired man with a cigar, but you're right. Do you realize the need of pectorals, the biceps Wonder Woman would really need?"

"So you're ideal women."

"No, I don't think you quite understand. If we were, the fans who came to us would love to touch us, fondle us, make love to us. They don't even want us to undress totally! They just sit there, very close, touch us slightly."

"Romantics."

"In a way. But it's more like the old cheesecake photographs of the 1940s. What do you think this costume is derived from?"

"One of my favorites." The girl had an amazingly seductive voice. "Has a more blatantly kinky feel about it."

"Thank you. But I wish I were a real woman!" She rested her head on my shoulders. One tear—just one—rolled down her cheek.

"You're all Pinocchio."

"Exactly," she sniffed. "And the nicest part about this whole thing is that there are a lot of people out there rooting for us to change into real women. At least from a distance."

"What do you mean from a distance?" I asked.

"It's just that, when they get up close, it all falls apart. Many of them just want us to be stronger and more independent, more heroic."

I said hesitantly, "Feminism can have its bad—"

"Feminist liberation is a good thing for ***real*** women!" Zatanna cried out. "***Real*** women are sexual, have romantic impulses. They have ***periods***, for Astarte's sake! They have to be released from that dependency. ***We*** have to ***get*** that aspect! We don't have it!" Her voice was a wail. "We don't have sex—we get married! And ***every*** super-hero marriage is attended by a super-villain menace! We just marry death, not sex!"

I tried to change the subject. "Who are the most popular super-heroines here?"

"The Black Widow, **Black Canary**, Phoenix—"

"***Phoenix?*** That's ***sick***—"

"Um-hm. You see what I mean? It's all death. Death and violence. Maybe it has to do with the idea that sex in our culture is dirty, and you've got to be punished for it—"

"Phoenix wasn't killed off because she was sexy."

"No, it's deeper than that. Our very reason for being around is bound up with violence and death: if we're abstractly sexy in that format, we can be the lure and the punishment all at once. Sex with all the guilt prepackaged. Why else is it so much fun to kill us off?"

"Hey, you know the story about Claremont and Byrne—"

"I wasn't talking about **Phoenix**, sorry. But take Jarella. Why, after she hadn't been a part of the ***HULK*** strip for ages, did they dredge her up and kill her off? Within six months? Why didn't they just forget about her? Because we're all death-figures, that's why."

"Then Starlin's female Death—?"

"Our matron saint."

"Thanos as the ultimate **comic book** fan." I felt dizzy.

Zatanna was now very close to me. Her breath was warm and sweet. I was getting excited by her after all.

"Maybe," I whispered, "Just **maybe**, super-hero women are the way out, the single element of hope, of mitigation in all this violence. Maybe it is the one way a culture which drills into you that sex is dirty, that heroism—violence, aggression, death—is noble—maybe you're the only 'clean' way some folks can find love and eros."

"I wish it were. But we're just **Pinocchios**. Department-store dummies with personalities and powers. And I should say just for balance that the men are not better. **Come here**," she said in an entirely different tone of voice.

The proprietor counted the huge stack of bills I gave him. "You know," he said, "those girls are all right. Good kids, even if they do look funny."

"They're fighting a losing battle, and their devotees are their worst enemies. To keep them pristine—"

"***Her*** we don't got."

"Hunh?"

"Forget it. In-joke."

"—is to perpetuate a tremendous sadness."

"Yeah. Howdja like Zatanna, eh? Some babe."

"I'll say. But tell me—what does 'sruoh rof no og' mean?"

But the proprietor just laughed. Then he leaned over. "Lissen. You look like a con-a-sewer to me, pal. I got a back room for special customers that—" and he whispered a few words.

I brightened immediately. "Do you have Broom-Hilda?"

"AWRIGHT!" he said, and away we went.●

SEE BIG BARDA!
SEE HOW SHE EXERCISES! BIG BARDA IS TOUGH! BIG BARDA IS INCREDIBLY STRONG! BIG BARDA COMES FROM APOKOLIPS!!!
AND THEREIN LIES OUR STORY!! FOR WITHOUT BARDA WE WOULDN'T GET TO MEET--
DOCTOR VUNDABAR AND HIS "MURDER MACHINE!"
WHAT IS IT, JACK? BUSINESS, OR JUST WATCHING?
IS YOU'RE SCOTT FREE--IT'S BUSINESS.
BUT SHE SURE IS A LOT OF GIRL TO WATCH!
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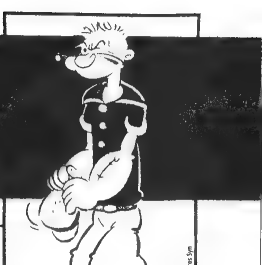
End NOTES



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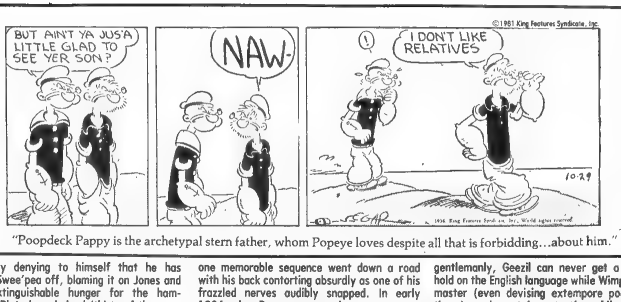
There is a great deal to say about the new ***POPEYE*** movie (which was directed by Robert Altman and written by Jules Feiffer) and much more to say about the comic strip upon which it and all other ***POPEYE*** adaptations are based: ***THIMBLE THEATER***, created by Elzie C. Segar. (Sequences from Segar's ***POPEYE*** stories can be found in volumes from Nostalgia and Hyperion Press, ***THE MENOMONEE FALLS GAZETTE, CHAPTERS, THE SMITHSONIAN COLLECTION OF NEWSPAPER COMICS,*** and individual Segar strips appear in Bud Sagendorf's ***POPEYE: THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS.***) There is much to say, but within the small space of this column I can only begin to discuss these subjects. Let us look, then, at aspects of the handling of some of the Segar characters in the movie and see how it compares with their treatment in the original strips.

Popeye himself is presented by the film as an outsider to society, as he was at first in ***THIMBLE THEATER***, but he does not represent any anti-social threat (that role is left to his father). Rather, Popeye as he evolved in the strip and as he appears in the movie, is an outsider with a clearer sense of right and wrong than the people in society, and who, through his determination and physical prowess, is able to rid society of its oppressors, or slay its dragons and drive out the evil, if you prefer.

In Segar's strips it is not simply the fact that Popeye settles problems with his fists that sets him apart from normal, civilized society. Popeye is not bound by laws: we are told at one point in the strip that Popeye has been in jail 2600 times, and whenever we see him put in jail, he simply breaks down the wall and walks out. Nor is he bound by social convention: he will tell his girlfriend Olive to her face that she is ugly but he loves her anyway. He speaks the truth no matter what. In the Segar storyline ***"Romance and Riches,"*** Popeye becomes Olive's butler after she suddenly becomes very wealthy, but he is so infuriated by the pomposity of Olive and her new-found rich friends that in the middle of one of her parties he takes off his butler uniform in a sudden angry mood and stalks out in his underwear, not caring whom he shocks. Astonishingly, Segar's Popeye is not even bound by certain sexual conventions. At one point, he donated all his clothes, on the spot, to a widow in rags, chuckling "I always wanted to be one of them nudisks." In the movie Popeye wants to be a "mudder" to Swee'pea. On adopting Swee'pea in the strip, Popeye even dons women's clothes to take Swee'pea to a women's meeting about how to be a good mother. Segar several times puts Popeye into situations in the course of which he must turn transvestite; sometimes Popeye is embarrassed by it all, but in the case of the widow, or the instance in which he impersonated his own sister as part of a scheme against a criminal, he seemed not to mind. "I yam amphibious," he says at one point. No social rules bind Popeye at all if he does not see the point to them.

Instead, Popeye serves a higher justice, that people in "normal" society cannot always perceive. The poor widow with the child told the then-nude Popeye (who was about to temporarily don her old rags, by the way) that as far as his act of charity to her went, "I can't understand all this unless you're crazy." Popeye replied that "When people think that a kind-hearted person is crazy, it ain't sayin' much for a world which is supposed to be civilized. I figgers like this, lady. I can buy another outfit of clothes, but if ya dies of pneumonia, yer kid kin not buy another mother." Popeye, thanks to his spinach-derived super-strength and invulnerability, also cannot be bound by physical limitations for the most part, and so he can put his higher justice into effect by force if necessary. His strength matches and serves his dedication to justice. In the film he tells Bluto "good always wins over bad," and whenever Popeye is involved, it is true.

Another problem in the film lies in the handling of the renowned hamburger connoiseur J. Wellington Wimpy and his nemesis George G. (or W., depending upon which strips you read) Geezil. Wimpy certainly has a big enough role in the movie, and Paul Dooley's portrayal of him (reminiscent of Oliver Hardy in his more placid moods) complete with the slightly incongruous fastidious body language, works in an interesting manner. In the current Saturday morning Hanna-Barbera ***POPEYE*** cartoons (which are, not unexpectedly, wholly undistinguished), Wimpy is given a voice like W.C. Fields; this also works. The Hardy approach captures one side of Wimpy's personality (the nearly imperturbable calm and unexpected gentlemanliness), while the Fields approach captures that of the other side (that of the schemer). It is the latter side that the movie neglects. In the screenplay, Wimpy is given a nice funny moment in the scene at Rough-house's restaurant in which he tries to get some hamburgers out of the gloomy Popeye by offering to "rent [him] a friendly ear," at the price of one 'burger per fifteen minutes. ("I am also available on a subscription basis by the month.") What hamburger-cadging bits of business remain in the film are rather perfunctorily executed, and, like his making off with Swee'pea to the gambling house, require none of the cleverness Wimpy demonstrates over and over in the strips at talking, tricking, and flattering people into giving him what he wants. Nor does the film make full use of Wimpy's gift for magnificently absurd flattery when in pursuit of his goal, ("Eyes like distant suns, radiant with atomic fire. I thrill at your proximity: you are the acme of femininity. Let's eat.") Unfortunately, too, the film fails to show that there are limits beyond which Wimpy will not go. Sometimes Segar would have villains try to enlist Wimpy as an assassin: Wimpy would react with horror and then quietly but adamantly refuse to participate in the scheme. (On one of those occasions, The Sea Hag finally threatened to kill him unless he assassinated Popeye, so Wimpy found himself forced to obey her. He went and apologetically asked Popeye's permission to kill him!) In the screenplay, Feiffer shows Wimpy's attacks of guilt when kidnapping Swee'pea for Bluto in an ingenious manner. In the Segar scripts, Wimpy perenially dismisses accusations of trickery from his victims by calmly denying his own identity ("My name is Jones. I'm one of the Jones boys.") Feiffer takes this one step further and has Wimpy


©1981 King Features Syndicate, Inc.
BUT AIN'T YA JUS'A LITTLE GLAD TO SEE YER SON?
NAW-
I DON'T LIKE RELATIVES
10-29
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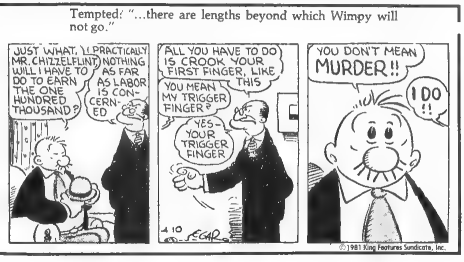
"Poopdeck Pappy is the archetypal stern father, whom Popeye loves despite all that is forbidding...about him."

nervously denying to himself that he has carried Swee'pea off, blaming it on Jones and his inextinguishable hunger for the hamburgers Bluto has pledged (thirty of them, as in pieces of silver). This desperate attempt at turning schizophrenic does not turn up in the finished film, although Altman comes up with his own excuse for Wimpy's crime by indicating at the end of the gambling scene that Bluto forced Wimpy to do his bidding. On the other hand, the film suggests that Wimpy only turned against Bluto under pressure from Olive, whereas in the screenplay Wimpy begins a determined, for him, brave effort to find out where Bluto has taken the baby, and then volunteers the information to Olive.

Geezil's cinematic handling presents more of a problem. It is wonderful that Feiffer decided to use this now-seldom-seen character, but he keeps Geezil far in the background, occasionally letting him voice a hatred for Wimpy that must be inexplicable to any filmgoer who does not know of their classic confrontations in the Segar Sundays. Segar loved to use what in the comedies of the English Renaissance would be called "humours" characters: characters motivated by a single, all-consuming passion. Segar's King Blozo of Nazalia (since renamed Spinachovia) is an eternal worrywart, who in one memorable sequence went down a road with his back contorting absurdly as one of his frazzled nerves audibly snapped. In early 1934, when Popeye was running a newspaper, Segar brought in six "grouchy, tempymental hoomerisks" to write a comic strip. With apparent incongruity, but perhaps with autobiographical meaning to Segar as Cat Yronwode has suggested, all six are haunted by melancholy, as is their joyless artist B. Loony Bullony. "They ain't no more ideas," they moaned: "life ain't worth livin'—they ain't nothin' funny." Wimpy is driven by his goal of self-preservation, sometimes manifesting itself as a cowardice that endows him with super-human speed in escaping danger, but more often appearing in the form of his eternal hunger for duck dinners ("You bring the ducks.") and especially hamburgers—which he will make not only from cows but even from lions and gorillas, should the opportunity present itself. Wimpy's forebears lie not simply in the humours characters but in the trickster-vice of medieval drama, and most importantly, the ever-hungry parasite of Roman comedy. Geezil is Segar's greatest humours character next to Wimpy, with whom Segar inevitably pairs him. They make an interesting combination: Geezil is vulgar and Wimpy is gentlemanly, Geezil can never get a proper hold on the English language while Wimpy is its master (even devising extempore poetry at times), and most importantly, while Wimpy usually maintains a deadpan, unshakable calm, Geezil continually and volcanically erupts with emotion. The passion that Geezil most embodies is impotent rage, continually aroused by Wimpy's eternal begging for hamburgers and worse, by his invariable success at tricking or flattering Geezil into giving him some. Geezil's fury expresses itself in torrents of ludicrous verbal abuse ("Phooey! You are flies in my soup! Could I stood it? Could I? Could I? You should be killed to death!"), none of which upsets Wimpy in the least, who often then confounds Geezil by amiably shaking his hand (much like Bugs Bunny's kissing Elmer Fudd after Fudd has failed once again to kill the rabbit). Geezil goes further: he will launch into fantasies about murdering Wimpy and receiving medals as a reward. Geezil will not stop there, either: he sometimes actually tries to kill Wimpy, yet somehow even at those times, Geezil never seemed evil, only comically distraught. Failing that, as Geezil always did, he might have tried to commit suicide, less in despair than in fury, as if he felt he had to destroy **somebody** to relieve his frustration, and if it could not be Wimpy, then it must be himself. The reverse side of Geezil's coin was his capacity for ecstatic joy, whether at coming into money, or more especially, at learning (always mistakenly) of Wimpy's absence or (better yet) demise. But the key to Geezil's appeal is his inability to do anything about what so infuriates him; through him we can recognize and learn at whatever frustrations we feel. The supreme Wimpy/Geezil episode can be found in Bud Sagendorf's ***POPEYE: THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS***. Geezil succeeds in poisoning Wimpy and is transported with joy, going on and on, panel after panel about how happy he was ("Ah! Ain't it grand to have no Wimpy!") while Popeye and a doctor tend their unconscious friend. At the moment the doctor pronounced Wimpy dead, Geezil, at the pinnacle of his ecstacy, offered to buy free hamburgers for everyone present. Immediately

Tempted: "...there are lengths beyond which Wimpy will not go."


JUST WHAT, I'LL PRACTICALLY MR. CHIZZELFLINT, NOTHING WILL I HAVE TO DO AS FAR AS LABOR TO EARN IS CONCERNED THE ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND?
ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS CROOK YOUR FIRST FINGER, LIKE THIS
YOU MEAN'T MY TRIGGER FINGER?
YES- YOUR TRIGGER FINGER
YOU DON'T MEAN MURDER!!
I DO!!
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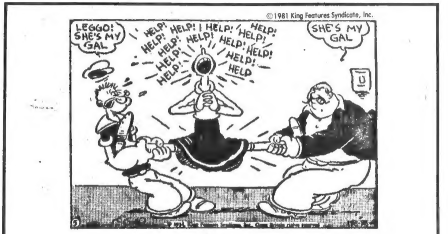
Wimpy stood straight up and claimed one for himself.

The movie is wholly successful, on the other hand, in dealing with Poopdeck Pappy and Swee'pea. Here I must digress briefly to register the usual complaint about how the comic strip has declined since Segar's death in 1938. His assistant, Bud Sagendorf, has now been doing the strip for over twenty years, obviously has great affection for the cast of characters (several of whom he helped Segar create),and often comes up with delightful and clever gags and storylines. Nevertheless, the series now lacks the intellectual texture and emotional resonance of the Segar years. Part of the reason is that there is no longer any dramatic tension to the series. There is never a real sense of danger in the adventures and hence no feeling that the characters' lives and happiness are at stake. No matter how comically Segar treated the strip's arch-villain, The Sea Hag (having her seduced by Wimpy, for example, or losing all her wealth and even her clothes in a gambling match with Popeye), she still remained a serious threat to Popeye and company. As she grimly wielded knives or set loose dangerous beasts, one could not regard her as merely a figure of fun. Note the eerie mood with which Segar filled her mysterious initial appearances and her equally mysterious final exit in ***"Murder Melody"*** in Nostalgia Press' ***POPEYE*** volume, or his portrait of the terror of a man fleeing her in ***"Plunder Island"*** in ***THE SMITHSONIAN COLLECTION OF NEWSPAPER COMICS.*** Nowadays, however, both The Sea Hag and Bluto (now renamed Brutus in deference to the ever-alert Disney lawyers, who are said to have felt people would confuse him with Disney's dog character, Pluto) have turned into outright buffoons. In the strip, Brutus has been given a glass jaw that makes him a laughing stock rather than a formidable opponent, while The Sea Hag's idea of evil, as seen in recent paperbacks, now seems to be to set up housekeeping next door to Popeye.

Characterization, therefore, is one of the problems with the strip as it stands today. In one Sagendorf storyline, Popeye begins acting tyrannically merely because a crown has temporarily been set upon his head; so much for Popeye's innate sense of right and wrong. Poopdeck Pappy nowadays behaves like a reprobate child. Feiffer goes back to the original characterization of Poppy, giving him back his anti-social meanness, the result of his long, hard life. Yes, Segar and more especially Feiffer depict the soft side of Pappy as well, that is truly devoted to his son Popeye, but the harshness is there, too, and the first Segar Pappy stories presented that harshness as something that would never be altogether tamed. Poopdeck Pappy is the archetypal stern father, whom Popeye loves despite all that is forbidding and even amoral about him. But note this: Popeye needs his Pappy to fill an emotional need, but not to teach him anything. Popeye matured into a heroic, responsible individual on his own, and, indeed, has gone beyond Poopdeck by learning how to fit comfortably into society. Pappy does not fit in so well, originally because he was a resentful hermit by nature, and nowadays because he is too immature to abide by the rules of adulthood. Hence, it was a gross miscalculation for Feiffer and Altman to decide to have their Popeye hate spinach and refuse to eat it despite Poopdeck's demands until finally Bluto shoves it down his throat.

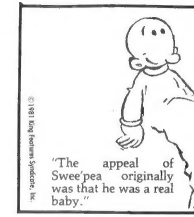


The familiar battle over Olive: "re-enactments of a ritual."

"Segar several times puts Popeye into situations in the course of which he must turn transvestite; sometimes Popeye is embarrassed by it all, but in the case...in which he impersonated his own sister as part of a scheme against a criminal, he seemed not to mind."

Segar's richly inventive *THIMBLE THEATER* cast.

NEW YORKER film critic Pauline Kael observed in her review that Popeye's distaste for spinach in the film means that there is no explanation for the great strength he exhibits before the concluding fight. (Well, there is no explanation for Bluto's, either.) ***VILLAGE VOICE*** critic Andrew Sarris accused the film of bad Freudianism, and I suspect that it was that spinach scene that he had in mind. To my mind it is a contradiction of the spirit and letter of the strip under whichever author to turn Popeye into a disobedient child. Popeye is not what anyone else made him, including his father. He yam what he yam. He is the moral center of his universe: he has no mentor in the strip and needs none.



"The appeal of Swee'pea originally was that he was a real baby."

Perhaps Feiffer and Altman chose to twist Popeye's attitude towards spinach in an overreaction against the ***POPEYE*** animated cartoons. Feiffer has stated over and over in recent interviews that he believes Max Fleischer (producer of the original and best ***POPEYE*** cartoons as well as the first ***SUPERMAN*** animated cartoons and the great ***BETTY BOOP*** and ***OUT OF THE INKWELL*** series) distorted Segar's creation, reducing the series to conflicts in a Popeye/Bluto/Olive triangle. It is true that battles over Olive's affections were not part of ***THIMBLE THEATER.*** Bluto was only utilized in one storyline in the strip during Segar's lifetime, and most of Popeye's spinach eating was off-panel—only occasionally did he gobble some down just before a big fight in the strip.

Nevertheless, the Fleischer cartoons penetrated to and refined the essence of Popeye's appeal. Beneath their comedic inventiveness, most Fleischer ***POPEYE*** cartoons are at heart re-enactments of a ritual. The hero, a small, likeably funny man (Popeye), is beset by a larger, seemingly invincible bully (Bluto) who steals the woman he loves, wrecks whatever project he has embarked on, and threatens, finally, to destroy him. The hero, basically an easygoing sort, seems helpless, as too often most of us find ourselves against life's problems, but finally he reaches his breaking point. "That's all I kin stand, I can't stands no more," declares Popeye, just as other until-then-passive cartoon heroes will say at similar moments ("This looks like a job for Superman," "Of course you know this means war" (Bugs Bunny), and "You know what? That makes me mad!" (Droopy)). At that point the hero draws upon the magic power he has that allows him to fight back whereas often we cannot: Clark Kent transforms himself into Superman, and Popeye downs his spinach. (Bugs and Droopy instead call on previously-unseen amounts of strength, intelligence, and luck.) The hero then rapidly unleashes explosive destructive force against the villain, and order is totally restored. Feiffer did not have Bluto kidnap Olive in his script, but inevitably the abduction occurs in the movie. Just as inevitably, the screenplay made Bluto the principal villain, provided Popeye with the traditional climactic spinach-eating scene, and thank God, gave him his famous theme song from the cartoons to sing, thereby making up for the forgettable new songs composed specifically for the movie. All of these were acknowledgements of the Fleischer influence, as were the voices used by Robin Williams and Shelley Duvall as Popeye and Olive. Duvall often sounds a good deal like Mae Questel's Olive in the old cartoons, especially in her cries of fear, while Williams reasonably imitates both the gravelly voice and the higher voice used for asides (which Williams apparently ***ad libs*** in the film) utilized by Jack Mercer, who started doing Popeye's voice after the first year of Fleischer ***POPEYE***s and still does it today. It gives one a very pleasant feeling to see the ***POPEYE*** movie begin with the Max Fleischer ***POPEYE*** opening titles, and then to see both Segar and Mercer credited prominently as well (the former complete with his trademark drawing of a cigar). All three well deserve the tribute.

One of the most serious problems with the movie, in fact, is where it strays from Fleischer. There are three big fight scenes, and the first two come to life because of the cartoon-like effects they use (even Popeye's celebrated "twisker punch"), which, by the way, are not even mentioned in the screenplay. On the other hand, Feiffer planned for one of the boats to be destroyed by the fury of the climactic battle between Popeye and Bluto (who in the film is no Brutus-like clown, but a formidable opponent indeed). Altman and Feiffer changed this to the battle within the cave, and, unfortunately, Popeye just hits Bluto once, with a blow that has no unusual effects like propelling him into the air (as with the octopus). Bluto literally turns yellow (a joke that does not work), and that is that. What the film needs at this point is an extended fight sequence to show Popeye fighting at full power, and to provide emotional release for the viewers who have been spending the last who-knows-how-many minutes watching Bluto beating the helpless hero. The Fleischers and those who followed them knew what was required, but it seems that Altman and Feiffer did not.

Sagendorf's Swee'pea is for me a wholly

The Sea Hag: "One could not regard her as merely a figure of fun."

ineffective character. The appeal of Swee'pea originally was that he was a real baby. Nowadays we see this creature that still looks like a baby, crawling about unable to walk, but who is able to talk just like an adult. There is no reality about today's Swee'pea at all: Popeye just as well might have a talking funny animal for an adopted son. With the film's Swee'pea Altman and Feiffer score one of the movie's biggest successes. A real baby is able to convey more appeal than Segar's rather non-realistic drawings of one, and the film perfectly captures and indeed emphasizes Popeye's intense bond to the child. Shortly after Swee'pea's introduction in the strip, Segar did a remarkable sequence in which Popeye gets "bonkus on the konkus" from a severe blow on the head. Popeye then wandered about with the fixed idea that he was "a lonely cowboy" who had lost everything he owned—except Swee'pea. That is what made the sequence more than a joke: the temporarily-confused Popeye would not let go of Swee'pea no matter what, repeating over and over again how lonely he was and how only his love for the baby gave his life meaning. It was a funny and wonderfully serious depiction of the strength which parental love can have. ●

"Popeye serves a higher justice."

HERE'S A HUNERD THOUSAND BUCKS FOR YA - I'VAM HELPIN' POOR WIDDERS WICH AIN'T GOT NO HUSBINS - BUY YA A HOME - AN SPINACH FOR YER KIDS - GIVE 'EM LOTSA BUTTERMILK ON ACCOUNT OF IT'LL KEEP THEIR INTESTIMINES HEALTY

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THE BARBARIAN:

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